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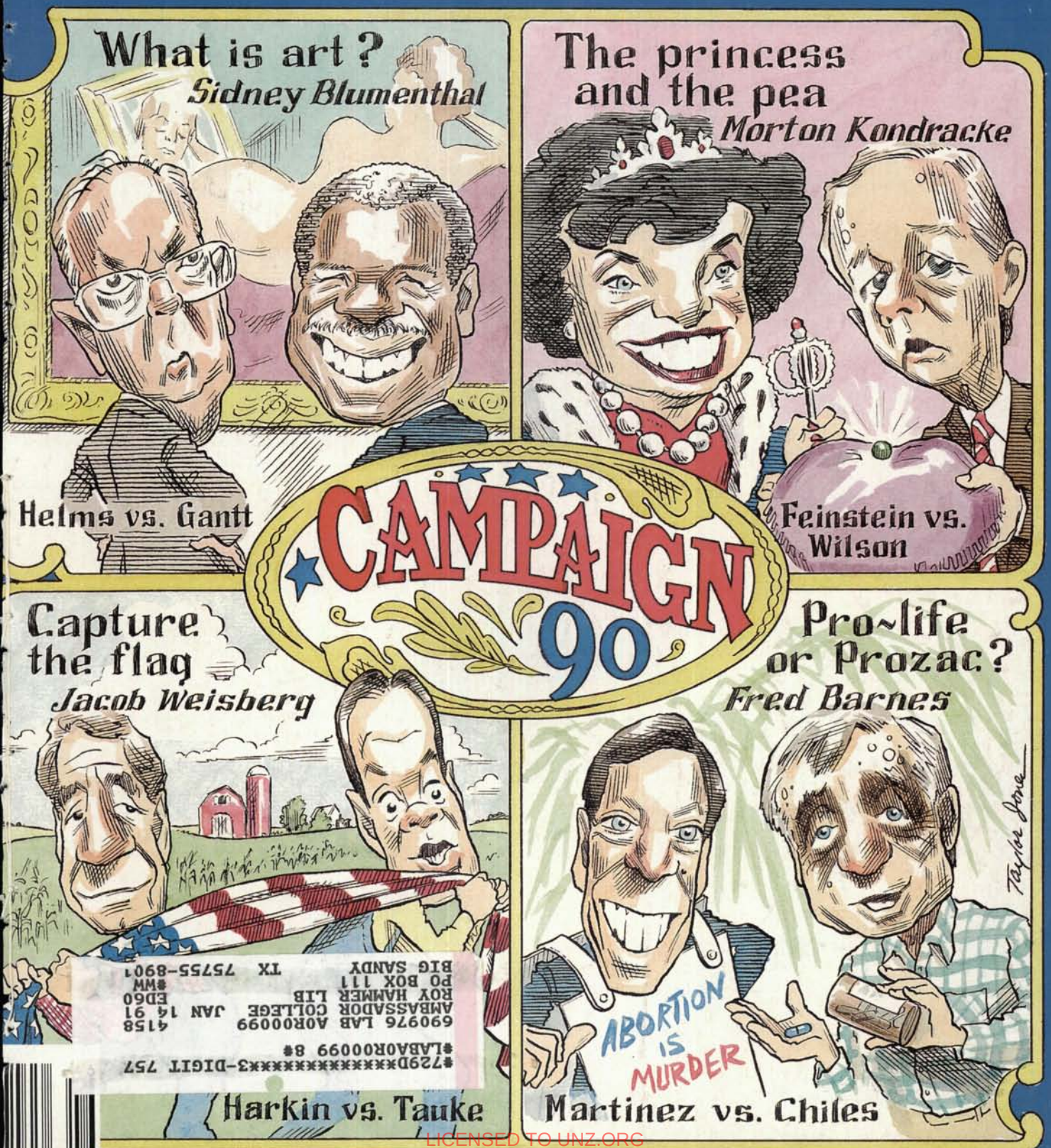

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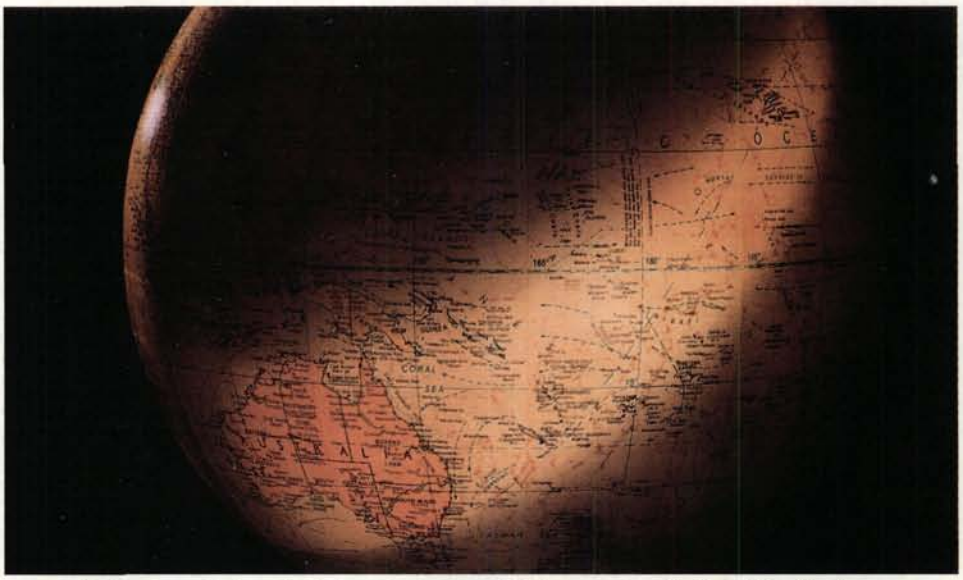

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FROM WASHINGTON

Art heist

Why don't you give a Picasso to the Metropolitan Museum of Art? The answer to that is probably simple: you don't own a Picasso. But what if you did? Would you give it to the Met? Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan is concerned that an obscure provision in the 1986 tax reform act is destroying the generous impulses of today's wealthy art collectors. Instead of donating their Picassos, they are selling these prizes to even wealthier collectors, some of them Japanese. America's heritage of European paintings is being shipped abroad!

Moynihan is leading the charge of *bien pensants* who are campaigning to get this matter corrected. The Senate version of the 1990 budget package contains Moynihan's proposed amendment. House Ways and Means Chairman Dan Rostenkowski is vigorously opposed. What will happen to the Moynihan amendment is unclear as I write. But *The New York Times* editorial page has dangled the adjective "thoughtful" before "members of Congress [who] support it through conference to enactment," a rhetorical bribe that even the most philistine politician may find hard to resist.

At the risk of appearing unthoughtful, let us consider the tax treatment of donated paintings and other cultural items before we rush to embrace Moynihan's proposal in the name of Art.

The idea of the charitable income tax deduction is that you should not have to pay taxes on money that you give away. If you earn $100,000 and donate $10,000 to charity, you declare $100,000 of income, take a $10,000 deduction (if, that is, you itemize), and pay taxes on $90,000. Fair enough. But suppose you give away a $10,000 painting instead. And suppose you bought the painting for $500. By giving it away rather than selling it, you avoid having to declare your $9,500 profit as income. But you still get to deduct the $10,000. In effect, you get to use the deduction against other income that you *didn't* give away. The same device works with shares of stock or any other kind of so-called "appreciated property." By giving it away, you avoid the tax on the profit but still get the deduction for the full amount.

This loophole has a long history of abuse. One minor chapter of the Watergate scandal was Richard Nixon's predating of the deed of his own papers to the Nixon Library, in order to get a bigger write-off. Guaranteeing an honest valuation of contributed property is a perennial problem, especially in the case of rare artworks for which there isn't an obvious market price. Appraisers have little incentive to minimize. But even the honest use of this tax break is an abuse of principles of fair taxation. In the bad old days of 50 to 70 percent tax rates, you could actually end up better off by giving property away than by selling it. That, at least, is no longer true.

Yet what's striking about the enormous fuss in the art world, and the nonprofit world generally, since 1986—culminating in Moynihan's amendment—is that tax reform didn't even close this absurd loophole. All it did was provide that the excess deduction (the $9,500 in my example) should be subject to something known as the "alternative minimum tax." The AMT kicks in when you have a high income but a lot of deductions. You have to refigure your income without certain deductions and pay the flat-rate AMT instead of the normal income tax you would otherwise owe. Right now the AMT is 21 percent (Rostenkowski proposes to raise it to 25 percent), compared with the normal top-bracket rate of 28 percent. Basically, you pay either 28 percent on your income after deductions (the basic income tax) or 21 percent on your income before certain deductions (the alternative minimum tax), whichever is greater.

If, as the American Association of Museums and suchlike groups insist, contributions of art to museums have plummeted because of the 1986 tax reform, this reveals how few rich people pay even 21 percent of their income in federal income taxes. That's because the alternative minimum tax only affects people who have so many deductions that they aren't even paying 21 percent. This puts the current debate about the merits of 28 percent versus 33 percent in some kind of perspective.

If the generosity of art donors is drying up because of a mild limit on their right to take what is in essence a double deduction, this puts that generosity into perspective as well. Those little plaques next to the pictures ought to read, "Gift of Mrs. and Mrs. Norman Jones, with the help of a large bribe from Uncle Sam." Few working people pay less than twenty-one cents on the dollar in federal taxes (including Social Security), and most working people make their charitable contributions with no tax incentive whatever (if they take the standard deduction).

Moynihan wanted to reverse the 1986 reform concerning all contributions of appreciated property. But he has settled for changing the rules on tangible property only. This would restore the tax break for gifts of paintings to art museums, but not for gifts of stock to universities and so on. Proponents emphasize that it wouldn't cost very much: perhaps $100 million over five years. Peanuts. But of course that's true of many tax loopholes, existing and proposed. And they add up. The philosophy of tax reform was to eliminate the loopholes and lower the rates. The *Times* now proposes to raise the rates ever-so-slightly to make up for reintroducing this loophole.

Like most tax subsidies, this one doesn't get and couldn't survive the kind of scrutiny a direct government expenditure gets, even though its effect on the deficit is identical. Lindley Clark points out in *The Wall Street Journal* that in 1988, despite the plunge in giving and even without the Moynihan loophole, the tax deduction for donated cash and art was a bigger federal subsidy to art museums than the money the government paid them directly.

But who would purposely design a subsidy like this one? The loophole for gifts of appreciated property was obviously an oversight when the deduction for charitable contributions first appeared, and only gained impassioned supporters after it was discovered and exploited. It makes little sense. Why should the government subsidize the gift of one $10,000 painting more than another, based on the accident of how long the donor has owned it? Why should it give a bigger tax break for the donation of 1,000 shares of stock purchased at $20 than for the same 1,000 shares purchased at $100?

These good-government-type arguments against special interest tax loopholes are familiar to the sort of people who frequent art museums, enjoy the fulminations of Senator Moynihan, and write editorials for *The New York Times*. If the special pleaders were loggers arguing for jobs or defense contractors arguing for national security, they could expect a stern talking-to from the *bien pensants*. But Art humbles us all.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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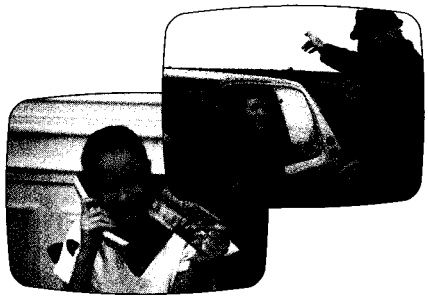

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CORRESPONDENCE

Florio's fix

To the editors:

If John B. Judis proves anything by his superficial analysis of New Jersey Governor Jim Florio ("A Taxing Governor," October 15), it is that even serious commentary on public affairs has become enamored of quick-fix, easy-answer politics. Florio's current low standing in the popularity polls is neither the result of bad spin control nor a commentary on liberal strategies or objectives. People are upset because taxes went up. The media's air of astonishment about what occurred reflects a sort of new thinking that values glibness and cunning as real achievement, while deriding political courage or intellectual honesty as plain dumb.

Florio may or may not recover political popularity, though it's worth recalling that Brendan Byrne not only came back from a deeper hole, but also led a successful referendum approval of the state's first income tax in 1977. Judis's assertion that Byrne was insulated from political backlash by general economic prosperity is nonsense. Byrne's service from 1974 to 1982 was marked by steep inflation and fitful growth, culminating in the deepest recession in two generations.

That Florio faces political problems following a major tax increase was inevitable. What's impressive is that he understood that inevitability and still moved ahead. It wasn't so long ago that we distinguished public leaders by the scale of the fights they took on. Judis, apparently, would now judge them on how effective they are at ducking fights altogether.

RICHARD C. LEONE
Princeton, New Jersey

To the editors:

John Judis's article about Governor Jim Florio leaves the wrong impression that I am mostly critical of what he's done, and gives short shrift to the reasons progressives like me support Florio.

Not only did Florio face a huge budget deficit and a school finance crisis left by a Republican administration, but he also faced an unfair tax system caused by high property taxes that soared 108 percent during the '80s. The system taxed the lower and middle classes at a much higher rate than millionaires. Florio is trying to address these problems, especially the regressive property taxes, through a progressive income tax that doubles the rate for taxpayers earning more than $150,000 a year.

Florio is also the first politician with the guts to spend money to educate our children and break with Democrats across the country too timid to challenge those policies that favored the rich at the expense of everyone else. Judis says Florio rammed his education program through the legislature with virtually no discussion. But high property taxes and what to do about them have been debated in New Jersey for ten years.

Judis argues that for Florio to have succeeded, "he would have had to acknowledge the deep skepticism that New Jerseyans feel about old-style liberalism . . ." But the tax revolt is not necessarily a reaction to liberalism. It is partly a variation of the "throw the bums out" mentality that pervades America. Also, New Jersey is basically a large suburb surrounding decaying cities. Suburbanites are people who left the city and are not by and large sympathetic to the idea of providing money for urban problems.

Yes, Florio has made mistakes. He should have closed corporate tax loopholes rather than raise sales taxes, worked to build public support, and presented spending programs that go beyond "throwing money at problems." But his communication campaign is beginning to work. When people see that their income taxes will not increase and when they get a bigger property tax rebate, they will view Florio's initiative more favorably. In short, it is too early to write off the Florio administration.

JOHN ATLAS
Montclair, New Jersey

The writer is executive director of Citizens for Tax Justice.

Silber's liberalism

To the editors:

In a recent Cambridge Diarist ("Confessions," October 15) Martin Peretz observed that *The Boston Globe*'s Curtis Wilkie understood as little about Massachusetts politics as he did about the Middle East. But Sidney Blumenthal clearly understands even less about Massachusetts politics than Wilkie ("Hi, Yo Silber!" October 22).

For example, Blumenthal claims that Silber authorized Boston University to buy up copies of his book, when, according to the local press, Silber's campaign bought the books. Similarly his charges, denied by Silber and BU, of improper real estate deals had been examined and dropped by the *Globe* years ago. Blumenthal quotes the criticisms of both Henry Kissinger and Harvard's Martin Linsky without informing the reader that

continued on page 45

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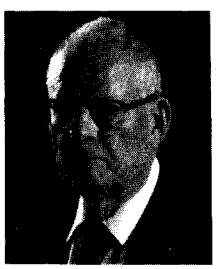
H. Ross Perot says: "An invaluable, permanent record of Dr. Deming's many contributions... I am glad to see that he is finally being recognized in his own country."



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NOVEMBER 12, 1990

EXIT LEBANON

Almost from the beginning of the civil war in Lebanon fifteen years ago, it was clear that Syria conceived of its neighbor to the west not as an independent country but as a province of itself. To be sure, that was a minority view at the time, but it has become a commonplace. Today there is just about no one who doubts that the creation of a Greater Lebanon by the French in 1920 has for all intents and purposes been nullified. But unlike Saddam Hussein's annexation of Kuwait, Hafez Assad's annexation of Lebanon was not accomplished by the kind of crude military occupation that perturbs the United Nations. Assad may carefully maintain the ornaments of Lebanese sovereignty and its traditional rules—a Maronite president, a Sunni prime minister, a Shiite speaker of Parliament—but the real power is his own. The Bekaa Valley in the east and Tripoli to the north have been under the writ of Damascus for more than a decade.

Now, however, Christian Mont Liban has fallen, and the de facto annexation is complete. All that is left of old Lebanon is nostalgia—mostly, if truth be told, false nostalgia. The deed was accomplished earlier in October, as a swift, cynical sideshow to the crisis in Kuwait. Under siege from Syrian forces and Syrian mortar, the rebel Maronite General Michel Aoun finally took refuge in the French Embassy. His regime didn't last the night. Ten days later journalists reconstructed the grisly military facts. "At least 750 people were killed in the Syrian-led offensive . . . and in reprisals after the attack," reported *The New York Times* on its front page (below the fold) on October 19. Two hundred of the dead, perhaps a lot more, were said to be civilians. A similar dispatch appeared in *The Washington Post*. Both of them reported that many of the dead had been executed with their hands tied behind their backs. (A session of the U.N. Security Council has yet to convene to investigate or condemn the slaughter. It is otherwise engaged.)

Within days of the news of the enormous bloodletting there was another small bloodletting in east Beirut: a postscript, so to speak. Dany Chamoun, the heir to the leadership of the National Liberal Party, was murdered in his home. Also murdered were his wife and two sons (an infant daughter was wounded but survived). Chamoun's crime? He had sided with Aoun. And there can be little doubt that the deed had Syria's signature on it.

The Syrians had been waiting for at least half a year to dislodge the stubborn Maronite rump. Aoun gave offense, of course, by his very existence. But he had also taken arms from Syria's enemy in Baghdad—small arms, to be sure, but arms nonetheless—and had made common cause with Yasir Arafat's Fatah wing of the PLO, itself a target of Assad's wrath. But what triggered the sudden Syrian attack was the distraction in Baghdad. Assad shrewdly judged that more mayhem in Lebanon would not be a big story while 200,000 Americans sat poised against Iraq.

Assad also had chits to call in. He had sided at a critical turn in the Gulf crisis with the moderate Arab states and with the West. He'd already collected $500 million from the Saudis and was led to believe there was more to come. (In their consistent recourse to buying and selling friends, the Saudis make even the French look principled). And the United States seemed prepared to tolerate any amount of opportunistic butchery for the sake of its grander diplomatic schemes in the Middle East. Secretary of State James Baker flew to Damascus to stand at Assad's side and welcome him to the fellowship of what passes these days for statesmen. Scarcely a reproachful word crossed Baker's lips.

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When Assad put an end to one of his biggest worries, the Christian salient in Beirut, the United States was suitably silent.

It is a silence that now envelops the ironies of America's current coalition in the Gulf. We may be siding for the moment with Syria against Iraq, but in reality there is little to choose between them. Both Syrian and Iraqi regimes are rooted in the same Baath political movement. And their mutual antagonism has a simple origin, as Senator Al Gore Jr. recently pointed out: the Baathite Syrians are Alawites, a Shiite heresy, while the Iraqis are Sunnis. Reason enough in this part of the world for hatred and murder. Hafez Assad's sudden enthusiasm for the U.S. intervention in the Gulf is not derived from some impetuous conversion to the virtues of international law. It's simply his best shot at undoing Syria's most immediate foe. And a useful smoke screen for the brutal dismemberment of a country once theoretically as sovereign as, well, Kuwait.

NOTEBOOK

1-900-JUSTICE: "Broward County Judge June L. Johnson read a stanza demanding anal sex; Assistant State Attorney Leslie Robson, in her slight British accent, read words demanding oral sex. Another prosecutor, Pedro Dijols, read words demanding both." Thus *The Washington Post*, reporting on the trial of 2 Live Crew in Ft. Lauderdale last week, in which the coarse and exploitative rap group was rightly acquitted of charges of obscenity. The American right and the American left have both been taught a thing or two by this white, bourgeois jury. The right has been given notice that the American people are alert to infringements upon American freedoms, that they do not fear the representation of sex, that they enjoy the variety of their own culture. In Ft. Lauderdale, as in Cincinnati, where another jury recently acquitted a museum of similar charges for mounting (whoops, for showing) Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs, the attempted infantilization of the American citizenry in matters of culture may have been stopped. Meanwhile, those on the left who warned that these cases, as well as the challenge to the National Endowment for the Arts, denoted creeping fascism also have been shown for fools. People for the American Way and its fellow worriers should note that in Cincinnati and Ft. Lauderdale the system worked. Which leaves only the matter of Henry Louis Gates Jr., the critic who has risen to snatch cultural defeat from the jaws of cultural victory. Gates testified that 2 Live Crew's genital obsessions are to be justified as art, more specifically as parody. He observed that Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Joyce also used "lewd words," though he failed to observe that lewd words were not the *only* words that they used. Gates instructed the jury on metaphor: "It's like Shakespeare's 'My love is like a red, red rose.' That doesn't mean your love is red and has petals. No, it means your love is beautiful." Thus, the verse "Suck this dick, bitch, and make it puke" doesn't mean, if we understand Gates correctly, that the poet has a penis whose similarity to a throat should not be lost upon a woman who reminds him of a dog. No, it means—well, what it means is perfectly clear. There are few sights sorrier than the sight of an intellectual in solidarity with the street. And Gates's comparison of Shakespeare to 2 Live Crew comes at a time when the national college dropout rate for blacks is 70 percent. What effect does this black teacher think he is having upon the 30 percent who remain, who have left the extraordinary obstacles behind them and finally opened their *Riverside Shakespeare*? And all this time these kids thought they were in college to raise themselves up.

CIVIL WRONGS: The hysteria that greeted President Bush's veto of the 1990 Civil Rights Act was predictably excessive. Forget the quotas subtext. The real issue is whether what American minorities need right now is an illiberal law that puts the burden of proof on employers with a dubious racial mix among their staff to convince juries they're not racist, and that creates an open-ended opportunity for litigation. We think not. If anything, the bill is a distraction from the real civil rights issue of the decade—the plight of the black underclass. We understand why neither the civil rights industry nor George Bush wants to talk about this: tackling it is not as easy as politicking in Northwest Washington. Maybe if they spent some time in Southeast, they'd get a better idea of how irrelevant their grandstanding really is.

THE REAL AMEN CORNER: Whatever his crimes, the butcher of Baghdad has at least brought a little joy to the members of the Aspin Procurement Institute. According to a report in *The Milwaukee Journal*, the organization, which encourages Wisconsin businesses to compete for defense contracts, held its annual meeting last month. The emcee, one Jim Roberts, remarked that the event was better attended than the previous year's. In fact, he noted with pleasure, it was the best turnout in the institute's five-year history. Looking out at the sea of shining defense contractors, Roberts declared: "Thank you, Saddam Hussein." The crowd exploded into wild applause.

WHAT YOU MEAN "WE," EUROPEAN-AMERICAN? Once you let ethnic pride out of the closet, there's no knowing where it will stop. The latest twist in the racial balkanization of America is a position paper from the mysteriously named Irish Task Force, in San Jose, California. Its point? To counter the racism inherent in calling people "white." The Task Force thunders: "We demand our own dignity, sense of history, identity, and culture by identifying with the culture of our continent of origin, as do almost all other groups in America." Among the guide-

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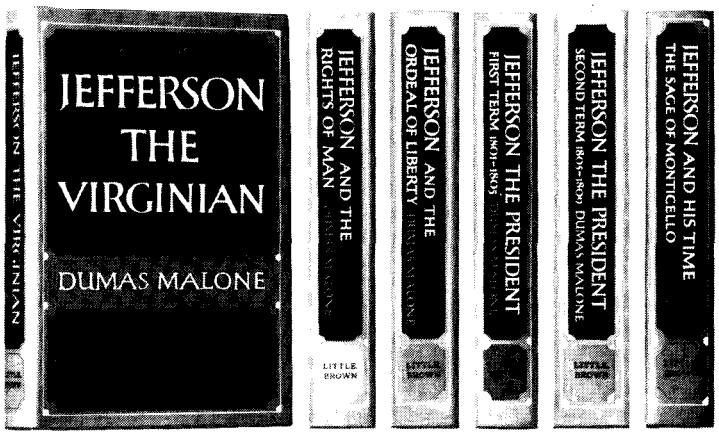

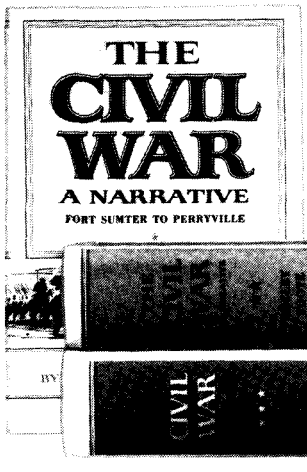

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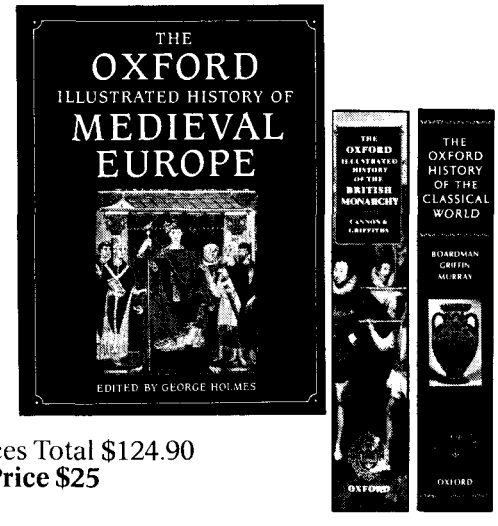
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lines for politically correct speech: "To describe other-than-African Americans or other-than American Indians: don't say whites, say non-African Americans or non-American Indians." For all non-African, non-Asian, non-American Indian people without color, the task force suggests this positive epithet: European-American. It even comes with a ready-made grievance: "No magic wand has been waved over our social and economic problems for easy solution. We European-Americans have plenty of problems." Arise, ye impoverished WASPs. You have nothing to lose but your dignity.

LIQUID PROSE: Will somebody please pass the Kleenex to the editors of *The Nation*, who saw fit to publish, in an article by one Lenni Brenner in their September 24 issue, the following sentence: "Liberals swim oceans of snot to get bucks from Zionists, who give the Democratic Party almost half its national funds."

GUILT BY ASSOCIATION: When radical attorney William Kunstler agreed to be profiled by James Traub for *In These Times*, he wanted it understood that his motive was anything but self-aggrandizement. "I strongly believe that lawyers like C. Vernon Mason, Gerry Spence, or myself—lawyers who work for political change—have a responsibility to put themselves before the media." Political change? Mr. Mason is the lawyer who assisted Al Sharpton in marketing the Tawana Brawley hoax. Mr. Spence's most recent victory on behalf of political change was winning an acquittal for Imelda Marcos. We didn't say it. He said it.

BURIED ERROR: The article by Conor O'Clery about the murder of the Russian Orthodox priest Father Menn ("Darkness at Dawn," October 22) made reference to funeral services for the singer Viktor Shalamov. Make that the writer Venedict Yerofeev. •

ANCHORAGE POSTCARD

FROZEN VEGETABLES

By Charles P. Wohlforth

Rarely does a state find itself with the money and the inclination to turn a subarctic forest into vast fields of unneeded barley, or to build a dozen dairy farms in a wilderness populated only by moose and bears. But a decade ago Alaska rushed into these schemes with abandon. Easy money was flooding in from the Prudhoe Bay oil fields, and every politician was a visionary.

The decision to grow barley in Alaska's interior, where winter temperatures drop to fifty degrees below zero, was made during an election campaign in the late 1970s. It was a popular decision. Agriculture professors from the University of Alaska had been producing studies for years that pushed the idea. They predicted that by 1990 Alaska would be a major farm state; agriculture would be as important as oil and gas. But living up to that ideal proved difficult. The anachronistic family farm is expensive to keep alive even if it is well-established and in a gentle climate. After a dozen years and $180 million, Alaska still doesn't have much of an agriculture industry, much less one that's self-sufficient.

Beginning in 1978, the state auctioned 100,000 acres of forest to would-be farmers and lent each more than $1 million to launch their farms. It sent brochures all over the country to attract bidders. Anyone who could put down 5 percent of a winning bid—as little as about $10,000—became a farmer. The state bought rail cars and a grain terminal, so it could ship the barley overseas. The town of Valdez, flush with its own oil boom and feeling left out of the "diversification of the economy," built a competing $30 million grain terminal.

The Valdez terminal has never been used, and the pieces to build the state's terminal were never assembled. There were a few small problems. It proved more difficult than the professors had predicted to grow grain in northern Alaska, and there was no market for the expensive, low-quality barley the farmers did manage to produce. To this day the professors say it could have worked if only the farmers and the state had followed their plans more closely and spent more money. But their studies hadn't bargained on the hail storms and early snows that destroyed the harvest, or on a drop in the world price of barley from the record high where it had stood when they justified the project.

At the peak of production, only 17,000 acres of the 84,000 cleared were actually planted. Since no one wanted to buy the barley, even that lackluster production yielded a surplus farmers could hardly store. The land, flat and stripped of its natural ground cover, became a windswept dust bowl. Swarms of grasshoppers formed in the changed environment, carpeting the ground and devouring the crops.

And then there were the marauding bison. (They were transplanted to the area in 1928, but that's another story.) The bison showed a particular liking for barley. The state fought back. It planted a decoy barley farm to draw the bison away from the farmers' fields. Workers carved a trail for them through the forest to the decoy and left hay on the trail to lure them. The bison simply ate the hay. During heavy rains the trail turned into a river,

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which carried away soil that was eroding from the fields.

But all was not lost. Now that Alaska had farms, the federal government could start subsidizing them. Congress established the Conservation Reserve Program in the 1985 Farm Act to give farmers an annual payment of up to $50,000 each to plant natural vegetation if their land is highly subject to erosion. The barley farmers easily qualified. Soon they were signing ten-year contracts with the federal government to replant natural grasses and trees on land that the state had just paid them to clear. Last year farmers in the area were paid a total of nearly $1 million—more than they ever made growing barley. In fact, only a few thousand acres are planted these days, not enough to slake even the state's modest hunger for barley. This way the farmers don't even have to live in Alaska, and many don't. Who would suffer those winters on wind-whipped, treeless land when they were being paid not to?

The deal got even sweeter in 1986, when the state told many farmers that they didn't have to pay back most of their debts and that they could keep not only their land but also their federal contracts. Officials reasoned the farmers weren't paying back the debts anyway, and foreclosing on them was difficult and time consuming. The state did reclaim a few farms before it gave up. Some of that land was resold, still carrying the federal land conservation contracts, to new owners who paid less than they were sure to get from the federal treasury just for allowing the natural vegetation to keep growing.

But before the barley project collapsed, the state tried to sustain it by creating its own market for the grain. It decided to build dairy farms that would be populated by cows that would eat the barley and make Alaska self-sufficient in milk.

In the vast Matanuska Valley, near Anchorage, a land speculation boom was going on at the time. Dairy farms were quickly turning into subdivisions thrown up to house a surge of oil boom newcomers. The farmers, unable to compete with milk shipped in from Washington state, were happy to sell their land for inflated prices. But the state owned 14,000 acres of the valley's best land, a forest of birch and spruce inhabited only by moose and bears at Point MacKenzie, and decided that was the place for more dairy farms. State officials held a lottery for the right to buy the land far below its true value, adding special rules to keep out speculators. The main rule was that the buyer had to turn the trackless forest into a producing, family-farm-size dairy within three years. Again, each farmer was lent $1 million to accomplish this.

It is difficult to build a dairy farm in a wilderness in only three years, and some buyers showed little desire to do so. State inspectors came to make sure they were living up to the bargain by counting the cows at each barn. But after a while, they started recognizing the same cows at several different farms. Finally they caught on: some of the barns were phony, and the farmers were shuffling the cows from farm to farm just before the inspectors arrived. The incident blew up into an inconclusive lawsuit, which dragged on for years while the farmers kept swapping cows and the inspectors kept coming to count them. On one occasion the cows were still being unloaded from a truck when the inspectors arrived. Being frontier gentlemen, they helped.

The project's larger problem was that it could not produce milk for a competitive price. Raw milk from Washington state typically sold for about $13 for 100 pounds, a price set by a federal program designed to help farmers. Alaska farmers charged more than $20 for 100 pounds and still couldn't make a profit. But local milk had always cost more at the grocery store. Before the state got involved, a farmers' cooperative creamery had stayed alive for many years on the goodwill of local customers. It is an article of faith in Alaska that one should support the economy by avoiding products from "Outside." The word Outside refers to anywhere that isn't here, and it is always capitalized in the local press.

Customer loyalty alone, however, could not save the farms. Just as the state's milk project was coming on line, the cooperative creamery—the only major creamery in Alaska, and the farmers' only market—went bankrupt. The state bought it to keep the farms in business, invested about $6.5 million in it, and bought, at the inflated prices, every drop of milk the farmers could produce. But the creamery still couldn't sell milk for a competitive price, and customers weren't interested in buying that much high-priced milk. In a single year the creamery bought about $1 million of milk more than it could use. A lot of that went down the sewer, which aroused such public outrage that the creamery began shipping the milk to Washington, where it was sold for less than half of what it cost to produce.

The milk-dumping problem was solved when the dairy farmers started going out of business. (Unlike the barley farmers, no federal program stepped in to save them.) Today only three dairies remain on the point. Others stand vacant, some the victims of vandalism. The state has adopted a policy of taking over the remaining farms and leasing them back to farmers for a few hundred dollars a month in exchange for forgiving the farmers' debts.

Agriculture officials still defend the program. They say it creates jobs and keeps money in the local economy. In a state where there are no income taxes and the government sends everyone an annual $900 check as a personal share of the oil wealth, there has been no ground swell of opposition to continuing the experiment. Public outrage recently has been confined to those who were deceived by the state's claims that it was selling "pure Alaskan milk," when most of it comes from Outside.

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But Alaska agriculture isn't as popular as it once was. Absurd failures continue to mount. Agriculture Director Frank Mielke, the state bureaucrat who runs the crumbling farming empire, is afraid a new governor, to be elected November 6, won't allow it to go on. He has been trying to set up deals to allow farming to continue without the state's active hand. But his attempt to sell the state's creamery—while keeping control of its business policies—received a setback this fall. Only one offer came in, for less than half its estimated value, and that was from the current management, with which Mielke has been feuding.

Meanwhile, the state did unload a few other odds and ends. It has sold eighteen grain cars for $600,000, about two-thirds of what they cost, and will pay off a lease it had with the railroad on land where it planned to build a grain terminal. And the cars are off to the Illinois Central Railroad. If you see a royal blue grain car going down the tracks, with the phrase "Alaskan Agriculture Serving Alaska and the World" painted in gold letters on the side, you'll know that—in some sense, at least—it's true.

CHARLES P. WOHLFORTH works for *The Anchorage Daily News*.

CAMPAIGN '90

THE CORN IS HIGH

By Jacob Weisberg

DES MOINES

In this year's congressional campaign, everyone shows up but the candidates. On October 16 Senator Tom Harkin and his Republican challenger, Representative Tom Tauke, were scheduled to hold a debate in Des Moines. With the budget crisis unresolved, the Toms couldn't get away long enough even to tape the broadcast in Washington. That same day the president was supposed to appear with Tauke at a pep rally at the Des Moines Civic Center. Bush made it, as did a thousand Tauke supporters. But the candidate was absent. Beverly Tauke stood in and berated the "crazies on Capitol Hill" who were holding her husband hostage.

Bush was greeted at the event by the Dowling High School drum and bugle corps, which blared arrangements of "Live and Let Die" and "Barbara Ann" beneath the largest American flag I've ever seen. The patriotic revelry was only marred shortly after the president began his speech, when three men in the audience began to heckle him. "Bring the troops home from Saudi Arabia," they chanted in unison, and, "No blood for oil." After they were ejected, Bush excoriated them: "Some people never get the word. The fight isn't about oil, it's about NAKED AGGRESSION." Later he returned to the disruption in a calmer vein. "I understand where these kids are coming from. I've been through that. But they've got the facts wrong. They're looking introspectively in an isolationistical way."

The introspectively isolationistical vote, such as it is, isn't going to be won by Tom Tauke, who has supported Bush's actions in the Gulf. It will go to Harkin, who has positioned himself to benefit should popular opinion turn against American involvement. Harkin has distanced himself from the president's policy, stopping just short of opposing the deployment of American troops abroad. He objected to the call-up of reservists, and argues that Bush and Gorbachev should ask the U.N. to take over the operation. "We have to be part of the world order that says no to Saddam Hussein. We can't go it alone like the policeman of the world," Harkin told David Yepsen of *The Des Moines Register* on television. This kind of rhetoric strikes a responsive chord in Iowans, who have long been dovish on foreign intervention. Henry Wallace, FDR's secretary of agriculture and vice president, who ran for president in 1948 on a one-worldist platform, is still a hero to many of the state's Democrats.

Harkin's isolationist foreign policy has its domestic corollary in an agrarian economic populism. Where Wallace was the father of modern farm subsidies, Harkin is best known as the co-author of the 1985 Harkin-Gephardt farm bill, which would have allowed farmers to impose mandatory production controls on themselves, forming cartels to boost commodity prices. Though the bill was defeated, it stands as the most aggressively pro-farmer piece of legislation to be given serious consideration in several decades.

Democrats are often unfairly accused of advocating "class warfare" and wanting to "soak the rich," but in Harkin's case the charges stick. Born in the tiny town of Cumming, where his mother, a Slovenian immigrant, died when he was 10, Harkin watched his coal-miner father suffer with black lung disease in the days before Medicare. His recollections of poverty still make him burn with resentment against those who have had it easy their whole lives. "I will not support more pain for the poor and middle class until the rich go belly up to the bar and pay their fair share," says Harkin, who describes himself as "a poor kid who knows how to fight." In his currently airing thirty-second spot, champagne cascades down a pyramid of glasses as an announcer intones: "For ten years in America the rich have been living it up, receiving billions in tax breaks, all voted for by Tom Tauke. Tom Harkin voted against tax breaks for the rich. Tom Tauke's tax breaks for the rich?" The glasses come smashing down. "Or Harkin—working for us."

By national standards, the campaign has not been especially sleazy or vicious. The reason is that Harkin,

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who is running fourteen points ahead according to the most recent independent poll, hasn't needed to make it so. When he defeated incumbent Roger Jepsen in 1984, Harkin slung a lot of mud. In one leaflet he alleged that Jepsen believed "if your daughter, sister, or mother is raped and has an abortion, she should be put to death." Harkin's basis for this assertion was that his opponent supported capital punishment and believed fetuses should be protected by a constitutional amendment.

Harkin has managed to turn a reputation for unpleasantness to his advantage by portraying himself as an outsider despite the fact of his incumbency. "I can be a little rough around the edges. But [Iowans] know in Washington I'm going to fight for them," he said in a recent interview. Harkin casts himself as a pork-barrel politician. "I'm going to continue to use my position unashamedly and unabashedly to see that Iowa gets its fair share," he told the audience at a fund-raiser in Ames. He noted that his position as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services puts him in an excellent position to bring home the federal bacon.

It is a point of pride that he has not "gone Washington." Harkin has made a practice of returning to Iowa for periodic "work days," during which he labors alongside constituents on various jobs. On the campaign trail he spends as much time as possible at events like the Covered Bridge Parade in Winterset, the birthplace of John Wayne. On a brilliant autumn Sunday, Harkin waved to the crowd from the flatbed of a vintage Chevy pickup truck, followed by a line of off-key marching bands and floats bearing the Madison County Beef and Pork Queens. At events like this, Harkin deepens his drawl and studs his applause lines with folksy Midwestern colloquialisms. Back in Des Moines the same evening for a television interview, the country boy rinses some of the hayseed out of his hair. By the time he returns to Washington the next day, it is gone entirely.

Tauke has also tried to play the outsider, but with much less success. In his opening statement during the first debate between the candidates in July, Tauke began, "When it comes to deficit spending, I'm as tight as a hoop on a vinegar barrel." Many Iowans smiled at this line because the Republican challenger doesn't strike them as the kind of guy who has spent a lot of time around vinegar or barrels. Raised in a comfortable, middle-class Catholic home in Dubuque, Tauke is cerebral, whiny, and somewhat boring—Harkin's antithesis. Tauke's television spots would meet the specifications of the reform group Common Cause. In his current ad, he stares into the camera and offers "straight talk" about his record. He answers Harkin's assault against wealth and privilege by lamely asserting that his opponent is "part of the tax and spend crowd in Washington."

In the third debate, in September, Harkin used his closing statement to ask his opponent to agree to a "clean campaign contract." "What I'm suggesting is that you just talk about yourself, not me," Harkin offered. "Don't mention me. And I won't mention you. And that way we'll have a clean campaign." Harkin crossed the stage and offered Tauke his hand. Tauke shook the hand, but rejected the proposal, pointing out that Harkin's campaign was much more negative than his own. An aide to Tauke suggested that signing the pledge would be "like signing a non-aggression pact with Saddam Hussein." Harkin now says his offer, which came under fire from editorial writers and cartoonists, was valuable because it illustrated why calls to eliminate negative advertising are foolish.

To his credit, Tauke has not trimmed his sails for political expediency. Because he believes life begins at conception, he wants to outlaw abortion, even in the case of pregnancies that result from rape or incest. This is far more consistent than the position that abortion is murder but that it's sometimes OK—and a stance that is extremely unpopular. (Tauke is also a rare Republican opponent of the death penalty.) Harkin, by contrast, would qualify for a gold medal in mental gymnastics on the issue. He says he is both pro-choice and pro-life. The latter he explains by pointing out that he's against aid to murderers in El Salvador and the Reagan military buildup. "They're the ones who have misused that term," he says of abortion foes. Harkin takes the position of New York Governor Mario Cuomo, that as a Catholic he personally opposes abortion but believes that women should be the ones to decide whether to have them.

When he ran for the Senate in 1984, however, Harkin attacked exactly the position he now takes. Tauke is running a radio ad that includes a taped portion of a speech Harkin gave at a Catholic high school in Des Moines: "Those who say I am opposed to abortion, but I will respect a woman's right to have an abortion whenever and wherever she chooses—I think that's a cop-out." That same year Harkin refused a $5,000 contribution from the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL). Harkin says that he does not remember the speech, but that the quote was "probably taken out of context." As for the NARAL contribution, he says it's old news that he doesn't want to talk about. Asked whether he would accept NARAL money this year, Harkin says that he's not certain, since the group hasn't offered him any. He has not objected, however, to NARAL's independent

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expenditures on his behalf. Despite his contradictions, the abortion issue is likely to benefit Harkin in a state that supports choice by a margin of two-to-one.

Observers of the campaign say that Tauke is "too nice a guy" who "doesn't have the stomach" for the kind of nasty campaign it would take to win. At this late stage, even going negative probably wouldn't help him much. The campaign Tauke has run wins him high marks for integrity. What it won't win him, come November 6, is Harkin's Senate seat. •

CAMPAIGN '90

REPUBLICAN OF FEAR

By Sidney Blumenthal

For his entire political life, Jesse Helms has played the outsider against the establishment, the tribune of the plain people, their voice of outrage against the corrupt cosmopolitans of the capital. Now, in the heralded year of the outsider, when the politics of resentment and alienation are reaching a peak unscaled for more than a decade, Helms should be welcoming the others to his redoubt. But instead of staging a campaign of historic vindication, his performance is stumbling and gasping, strangely uncertain and defensive.

In a diabolical bit of casting, his opponent is Harvey Gantt, a sterling character, the first black to attend Clemson University, who went on to become an architect and the mayor of Charlotte. In spite of his impressive résumé, however, Gantt should not necessarily have turned into such a formidable rival. After all, six years ago Helms bludgeoned the leading Democrat in the state, Governor Jim Hunt, into a motionless heap. And Gantt lost his last election in Charlotte to a Republican woman. But his inoffensive manner—soft-spoken and crisp on television in his white shirt and tie—is among his chief assets; it seems to have partly confounded Helms in his effort to inflate Gantt into a satanic menace.

Gantt lately has begun to dominate the debate in part by stressing how North Carolina has fallen behind in education and environmental protection. In taking this approach, he has done more than merely score points. He has joined the great struggle that has torn apart North Carolina politics for forty years—a struggle between "modernizers" and "traditionalists," as defined by University of North Carolina professor Paul Luebke in *Tar Heel Politics*. The first battle between the forces of reform and reaction occurred in 1950, when a nasty race- and Red-baiting campaign helped unseat progressive Senator Frank Graham, the former University of North Carolina president. It was this campaign that brought both of North Carolina's senators—Helms and his antithesis, Terry Sanford—into politics on opposing sides. The Helms-Gantt contest is simply the latest round of an enduring conflict.

Helms's response to Gantt's issues has been a flurry of ads in which he pretends to have a record in these areas, which in fact he has almost completely neglected. "It's no fun, day after day, your positions misrepresented," he has crankily complained. Trailing by eight points in the polls with only a week to go, Helms's hope has come to rest on a submerged racist vote that may be too embarrassed to reveal itself to the pollsters. In his first senatorial campaign, in 1978, Helms rode in on the anti-Carter reaction. In 1984 he was helped by having Ronald Reagan at the top of the GOP ticket. Now he seems at a loss for the external factor in raising him above his irreducible base, which is about 40-something percent of the electorate. No one knows, however, whether the Gantt lead will remain firm; if he were white there would be much less doubt about the outcome.

Helms has been plagued by a disappearance of enemies, for the Berlin Wall fell on him as well as on the Communists. In his frantic search for substitute villains against whom he can posture as an implacable hero, he has seized upon the dead homosexual photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, the National Endowment for the Arts, and artists in general. At some of his rallies he stations an aide with a huge folder in a front row. He is the keeper of the Mapplethorpes, which Helms invites the men in the audience, but not the women, to inspect closely.

He stands for a receding "us" against a receding "them." "I think you sent me to Washington to vote against foreign aid and a thousand other things," he explains in an ad. Foreign aid, in fact, is one of his chief bogeymen; the unelaborated "thousand other things" he opposes is his version of a thousand points of light. This ad tells a great deal about his campaign—not merely because it exposes his sclerotic, chronic negativism, but because it is one of only two commercials in which he actually appears and speaks. Most of the rest are thirty-second screeds in which the words "Liberal Values" are flashed above Gantt's picture. Yet Helms's projection of evil liberalism has not gained him the initiative as it did so easily in the past.

Helms himself has become a furtive, hidden figure. He is campaigning from a bunker, from which he only infrequently makes forays into the sunlight. From January through August of this year, he appeared in public in North Carolina perhaps once every two months. Since then he has made weekly outings. The concealment of the candidate may partly be an attempt to disguise his physical decline. He is, by all accounts, a very old 69 years. He cannot sustain his energy for long, and he must lean on assistants to climb steps. His speaking voice is not as strong as it was even a year ago.

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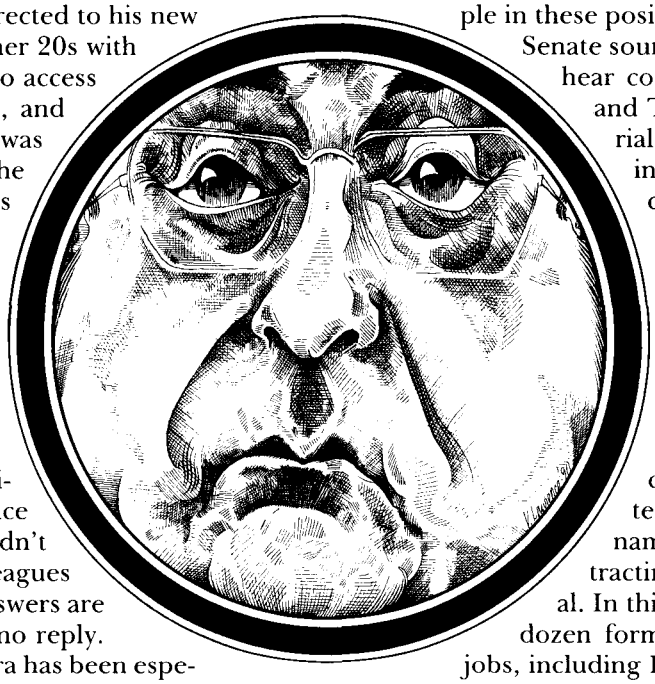
In his own campaign, he is more a memory than a vital presence.

His disdain for the local press is hardly new, but his fear of being exposed in uncontrolled public settings has become near pathological. He will not talk before any civic group, even local Kiwanis and Rotary clubs; nor will he appear in the major cities. He attends only rallies before carefully organized rural crowds where he is assured of a friendly reception for his denunciations of "the sodomites." At these events he may sometimes hold an invitation-only press conference (*The Raleigh News and Observer* is banned), which he abruptly terminates whenever he is asked a challenging question. No one of any position of responsibility in his campaign will speak to the reporters assigned to cover it. His erratic schedule, moreover, is difficult to learn in advance. All queries must be directed to his new press secretary, a woman in her 20s with no political experience and no access to the Helms inner sanctum, and whose previous employment was in a frozen yogurt shop. The "Yogurt Queen," as she is known, responds, if at all, by fax machine. I sent her several questions: Do you have a schedule of appearances by the senator? Why won't Senator Helms debate Harvey Gantt? Eight Republican senators endorsed Senator Bennett Johnston of Louisiana, a Democrat, in his race against David Duke. Why didn't Senator Helms join his colleagues in this? Unfortunately, the answers are unknown because there was no reply.



The kinder, gentler Bush era has been especially unkind to Helms. The president's deliberate shift in the atmospherics from the Reagan period has debased the mean-spiritedness that is Helms's currency. Though Bush has come to North Carolina to stump for him, within the upper reaches of the administration the attitude toward the obstructionist senator is, to say the least, ambivalent. Secretary of State James Baker, for one, has privately wished for his defeat, according to a reliable source who heard him.

Helms the outsider has mastered many of the most arcane techniques of Washington in order to promulgate a regime of terror within the bureaucracy—the Republican of fear. His power in Washington does not derive from his social conservatism, from his ability to manufacture controversies out of photographs, but from his position as the ranking Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee and the methods his staff uses to extend his influence.

These techniques, as explained by Senate sources, are essentially threefold. First, Helms controls and manipulates information in a town where, as the cliché has it, information is power. Two of Helms's staffers on Foreign Relations—David Sullivan and Bill Triplett—are former intelligence operatives who have enormous experience handling classified materials and have developed wide networks in the intelligence community. Both have the highest top secret clearance and read the *National Intelligence Daily*, made available only to 100 executive branch officials and the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and their cleared staffers. This puts Helms into executive branch debate on matters such as arms control often before they reach the attention of the president. Other senators are at a clear disadvantage before his superior advance knowledge. What makes the use of such materials especially insidious is that Helms's senior staffer, James Lucier, and his deputies have refused to submit to security clearances, which is the normal practice for people in these positions. Every day, according to Senate sources, they "accidentally" overhear conversations between Sullivan and Triplett about classified material, which is forbidden to be used in public debate. But since Lucier and the others have no clearances, they break no law when they leak.

The second source of Helms's power is the foreign policy nominations game. Several hundred names, along with the appointees' security files and financial records, are sent to the committee every year. Helms uses these names as sources of leverage, extracting favors in return for approval. In this way, he has placed at least a dozen former staffers in administration jobs, including Richard McCormick as undersecretary of state for economic affairs. In return for the McCormick job, Helms promised Baker that he would no longer block nominations, according to Senate sources. But nominations are still being paralyzed. The holds on them have been placed not by Helms but by his New Right allies, Senators Steve Symms and Gordon Humphrey. In each case a price has been paid to Helms for the release of the hostages.

Helms's third method of intimidation is practiced against staffers of other senators. Helms's staff has no hesitation about leaking damaging information to their fellow wingers on *The Washington Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* to try to cow their counterparts on the Hill. By wielding the threat of getting their names in unfavorable—or, worse, favorable—stories, they can quietly pressure them to go along.

But after the cold war Helms and his centurions have a sense of anomie. More than ever their agenda has focused on blocking nominations—trying to attack the appointees on personal grounds, or even for having contributed to the campaign of a Democrat. Helms has rapidly reverted to the pre-cold war position of the

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right, opposing most of the structure of diplomacy that has developed since then, especially foreign aid. His staffers, hunting for big game, have drawn him into dubious battle on a number of fronts. Helms, for example, recently lent his name to the cause of Sikh liberation, which somehow lacks the universalism and moral glamor of the long twilight struggle.

Helms's maneuverings within the bowels of Washington have mainly contributed to the muddle over the direction of post-cold war foreign policy. His principal effect has been to create an alliance of the center between the Republican administration and the Democratic leadership that thwarts a deeper debate over issues from aid to Eastern Europe to the pace of arms control. In his quest for an enemy, he has fostered one for everyone else: himself.

And yet Helms has received a gift in the form of someone more fiercesome than Harvey Gantt. Saddam Hussein has appeared as a perfect foil against which Helms can demonstrate once again his famous resolve. Soon after the invasion of Kuwait, he traveled with a ranking congressional delegation to Saudi Arabia to confer with King Fahd. He was ushered into the ornate palace and escorted to a seat on a sofa next to the king. For all his years of standing his ground, Helms had never before really been on a front line. At last he was a player in a national security crisis. And, as the king began to speak, surrounded by his ministers, Helms, to the silent fascination of the American delegation, slowly began to close his eyes and nod off. •

CAMPAIGN '90

GROGGY GRINGO

By Fred Barnes

ORLANDO, FLORIDA

The amazing thing about the race for governor of Florida is that former Senator Lawton Chiles isn't running away with it. He's practically a folk hero, having walked across the state in his first Senate campaign in 1970 and limited contributions to $10 in his second (he won easily both times). Though Florida swung Republican in the 1980s and Chiles is a Democrat, better than 70 percent of the voters view him favorably. "He's loved," concedes Republican consultant Alex Castellanos. Chiles won the Democratic primary in September by a whopping 69 percent to 31 percent over a formidable opponent, U.S. Representative Bill Nelson, who carpet bombed Chiles with personal attacks and outspent him $6 million to $2 million. Now Chiles has the backing of gruff conservatives like Tommy Thomas, Ronald Reagan's man in Florida for nearly a decade, and celebrity liberals like singer Stephen Stills, who held a benefit concert for him in an Orlando bar on October 21. On top of all this, Chiles is running against Republican Governor Bob Martinez, whose negative rating was once 71 percent, seven points higher than Arizona Governor Evan Mecham's when he was impeached.

What's holding Chiles back? Mac Stipanovich, Martinez's cunning campaign guru, says Chiles has the same problem as Republican Senator Jesse Helms, only in reverse. People in North Carolina vote for Helms even though they don't like him; voters in Florida are leery of electing Chiles governor while simultaneously regarding him as a saint. Chiles himself is largely to blame for this. His political style is a throwback. He's moralistic and self-righteous, a classic Southern reformer, part liberal, part populist, who's at war with the hard-edged, big money politics of the 1990s. Chiles would rather spend a day being lectured on pollution and algae buildup in Florida's coastal waterways than haranguing Martinez in a speech or TV ad. So, on October 18, that's the way he spent his day.

For Chiles, conducting the right type of campaign is more important than winning (he and Martinez approach election day in a dead heat). His aim is to purify politics and government by ridding campaigns of special interest money. Chiles won't accept donations of more than $100; tickets to the Stills concert cost only $20.50. When Reagan appeared at a $1,500-per-person reception for Martinez, Chiles countered by staging a $1.50-a-head gathering, serving hot dogs. "The way you run is the way you are going to be able to serve," says Chiles. "Once you accept money from developers and other interests, you're locked in."

Chiles has grandiose dreams. "If we win, politics won't be the same in this country," he says. Frank Greer, Chiles's Washington media consultant, shares his enthusiasm. "The whole point of this campaign is to revolutionize politics, to get big money out of politics," according to Greer. He's well aware that this means consultants like him will lose money and clout. Greer produced TV spots that stress the evil of big campaign contributions. In one, Chiles walks along with a cheering crowd, while his disembodied voice says, "If we're going to control growth, hold down taxes, and protect the environment, we've got to stand up to the wealthy special interests. That's why we've limited contributions to $100."

All this is nice, but Chiles has to win to drive his point home. He's raised $4 million from more than 60,000 donors, an impressive number for a state race. But Martinez will outspend him by nearly three-to-one. What's more, Chiles hasn't used any issue effectively, except maybe campaign spending. On most issues he is well intentioned but vague. He sounds like Jimmy Carter and Jim Hunt of North Carolina, Southern progressives who thrived in the 1970s. Chiles says there are plenty of solutions around to the problems of government. Politicians just have to find them. "We have to listen to people, see what works, and try and replicate

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it." Chiles talks about making government "smaller and smarter." In a TV ad, he says airily that he'll "get rid of non-essential high-level bureaucrats."

When I asked him about abortion, he got a pained look on his face. "To me, it's a personal issue," he said. "It's a human rights issue. I'm not comfortable with making it a political issue." Given the failed attempt by Martinez in 1989 to limit abortions, most other Democrats would leap at the chance to exploit this topic. But not Chiles. After flip-flopping on the issue, he's now uncomfortable discussing it at all. For twenty years he opposed abortion except in cases of rape, incest, or where the life of the mother is at stake. He switched when Bill Nelson, who'd abandoned his own pro-life stand months earlier, browbeat him in campaign debates. Nelson insisted he alone would veto any bill restricting abortions. Chiles, fearful Nelson was gaining, finally said he would too. That created dissension in the Chiles family. His adopted daughter, Rhea Chiles MacKinnon, an anti-abortion activist, stopped campaigning for him.

Chiles showed up at one pro-choice event and reluctantly wore a pro-choice button. Still, says campaign manager Jim Krog, "he's sensitive about making it an issue." Greer, who packaged a brilliant pro-choice ad last year that helped elect Douglas Wilder governor of Virginia, contends Chiles doesn't need to use the issue on television. That may be fortunate because the Martinez campaign has produced a counter-punch spot zinging Chiles as a flip-flopper. "We'll put a left hook on his chin on the issue of character, courage, and principle," says Stipanovich.

One issue that's taken center stage in the campaign is Chiles's mental health. When he left the Senate in 1988, he said he was suffering from burnout. His last two years in Washington were like "being in prison." He encountered deep depressions, "the black blacks," as he put it. When he announced for governor last April, Chiles mentioned that he takes Prozac, a strong anti-depressant. In the primary Nelson suggested that Chiles, 60, was too sluggish, mentally and physically, to be an effective governor. He demanded that Chiles release his medical records. Chiles did, and they revealed nothing serious.

By attacking Chiles furiously, Nelson aided Martinez. "He kind of threw himself under the wheels of the truck," says Stipanovich. This lets Martinez broach the health issue obliquely, without getting blamed for attacking Chiles personally. He emphasizes his own high level of energy. "I don't need much sleep," he says. "I'm up at 5 a.m. and jog two miles." Martinez, 55, says he relishes long days of campaigning. Chiles plainly doesn't. He has two leisurely "program days" each week to hear officials and citizens chat about local programs. That sort of campaigning is "just boring, but it fits his general energy level and health," sneers Stipanovich. He refers to Chiles as a "sleepy dude."

From the start of his term Martinez has encountered spells of voter discontent. In the first month of his governorship he made the incredibly unpopular decision to raise taxes on services (lawyer's fees, advertising, real estate transactions, etc.). A public outcry then forced him to seek repeal of the tax hike. His favorability plummeted to 15 percent, his unfavorable rating soared past 70 percent. His chances of re-election faded. Stories circulated in Florida newspapers that President Bush and national Republican leaders wanted him to step aside and let another Republican run. This wasn't true, but it further deflated his prospects.

To draw even with Chiles, Martinez, guided by Stipanovich, fought back gamely, seizing every political opportunity. He made the most of the decision to go ahead with the execution of mass murderer Ted Bundy. To display an environmental credential, he intervened to block the shipment of dolphins captured in Tampa Bay to the National Aquarium in Baltimore. (He said the dolphins had been trapped in an animal preserve.)

The conventional wisdom is that Martinez was hurt by calling a special legislative session to consider abortion restrictions (his bill died in committee). Actually, it helped. After reversing himself on the services tax, Martinez would have worsened his reputation for clumsy indecision had he waffled on abortion. His anti-abortion views were well known. He's been on the rise ever since the session, a year ago. He was 24 points behind Chiles last spring. By August he trailed by a half-dozen points. By September he'd drawn even. His big issue in the closing weeks is a traditional Republican one, taxes. His position is clear and crisp, Chiles's is cloudy. "We do not need to raise taxes, period," says Martinez. During the primary, Chiles said taxes might be boosted next year. Now he says he'd look for spending cuts before resorting to new taxes. Chiles says Martinez is the high taxer, having raised taxes $3.8 billion. "There's an old saying that you shouldn't mention rope in a house where there's been a hanging." This hasn't stopped Martinez.

There's a bigger issue in Florida: whether the Republican Party's surge in the Sunbelt will continue. Florida led the way in the 1980s. Voter registration went from two-to-one Democratic to five-to-four. Martinez was part of the surge. As Tampa mayor, he quit the Democratic Party in 1983 and joined the Re-

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publicans. In 1984 Stipanovich ran the Reagan campaign in Florida, cleverly amassing a list of Republican voters that proved useful in Martinez's drive for governor. If Martinez wins, he'll be the first two-term Republican governor ever in Florida. And he'll be able to assure Republicans a fair shake in reapportionment (the state gets three or four new House seats). "With my re-election, you're looking at Republicans being the majority party in the early 1990s," Martinez says. "If Chiles wins, that would be delayed."

Chiles is murky on this point. His liberal supporters are eager to stem the Republican tide, end the Reagan era, and punish the turncoat Martinez. The Democratic chairman of Orange County (Orlando), Irby Pugh, considers Martinez the epitome of all that went wrong for Democrats in the 1980s, calling him "the prince of darkness." Sure, says Chiles, his victory would reverse some Republican gains. But it wouldn't guarantee Democratic hegemony. Republicans, rest easy. •

CAMPAIGN '90

COASTAL DUMPING

By Morton Kondracke

LOS ANGELES

This biggest (and, once upon a time, happiest) state of the union knows it's got to change, big-time. In 1985, according to the Field Poll, 78 percent of Californians thought their state was one of the best places in the country to live. Last year that number was down to 58 percent, its lowest point in twenty-three years. During the weekend of October 12, thirty-seven people were killed in drive-by shootings and other murders in Los Angeles, and last year a study by the University of Southern California showed that the area's smog reduces children's lung capacity by 20 percent.

This June California's citizens voted by referendum to spend $18 billion to rebuild the state's overloaded transportation system during the next decade, and to raise gas taxes by nine cents a gallon to pay for it. Polls show that by 52 to 37 percent the public favors a radical initiative ("Big Green") to clean up the state's air and water, and that by three-to-one it supports an even more radical one to discipline its boss-ridden legislature. There seems to be a consensus on the need to improve the schools, control rampant crime, and get the state's finances under control.

In the California governor's race, the key question is whether voters want as their agent of change a liberal woman Democrat, tough on crime but a believer in big government, or whether they will decide that it's safer to rely on a moderate male Republican. Going into the final days of the campaign, the bland Republican, Senator Pete Wilson, seems to be leading the vivid Democrat, former San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein, but barely.

In a small forest's worth of position papers, the two candidates have conducted an intelligent and generally uplifting debate about the real issues facing California, including growth management, pollution, education, and state finance. Feinstein proposes that state government and powerful new regional agencies plan where to house, employ, and transport the 700,000 immigrants into the state each year. Wilson says this would usurp the authority of existing local governments and regional agencies, which he claims can handle the task. Feinstein favors Big Green, which would require a cut in the use of fossil fuels by one-fifth by the year 2000; gradually ban ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons and twenty pesticides deemed to cause cancer; prohibit sewage dumping in the ocean; and spend $300 million to buy up the state's redwood forests. Wilson opposes the measure as a job-loser, although he favors creation of a California Environmental Protection Agency and new water-recycling plants, has sponsored clean air legislation in Congress, and opposes offshore oil drilling.

Wilson favors education reform, including merit pay for teachers, alternate certification to let outsiders get into teaching, and experiments in school choice, plus locating social service agencies in schools and expanding early-childhood health programs—all from existing funds. Feinstein, especially since her endorsement by the California Education Association, talks less about reform and more about money, advocating spending $850 million from the state lottery to pay for early childhood education and the earmarking of 40 percent of all state revenues for education.

The least discussed major issue facing the next governor is a state budget deficit of somewhere between $500 million and $4 billion. Both candidates acknowledge its existence and neither rules out higher taxes, but neither wants to be identified too closely with budget cuts and tax increases. Feinstein does favor surcharges on the wealthy. Wilson won't say which taxes should be raised. First, he says, he wants to institute budget reforms that would give the governor and state legislature greater power over spending priorities—89 percent of which currently get set by voter initiatives, entitlements, and court orders. He also backs Proposition 140, which would set term limits for state officials, eliminate pensions for legislators, and reduce legislative staffs. Feinstein opposes both 140 and a rival measure for public financing of campaigns.

All this is known as substance—important, but dull. And dullness is especially abhorred in California. A reporter for Los Angeles's KCBS-TV told me that her bosses routinely put political news in the second half of nighttime newscasts because ratings are taken in the first half, and political stories deflate them. Whether the public's

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torpor is the result of its media diet or the cause, the campaigns are spending millions on thirty-second and sixty-second TV ads designed to push through it by poking hot buttons, playing semiotics and going negative. Both sides say that what the public seems most interested in is the character and fitness of Dianne Feinstein, who would be the state's first woman governor.

Feinstein's managers want her seen as a strong, independent-minded woman warrior and protector. They portray her in ads as the mayor who rescued San Francisco from the trauma of her predecessor's assassination, rebuilt its downtown, spurred its economy, expanded its police and fire departments, began the fight against AIDS—and balanced the city budget. The ads show her being booed by fellow Democrats for supporting the death penalty. They say that she was "forged from tragedy," is "tough and caring," and "will be there for California." (This last line is a dig at Wilson, whom Feinstein accuses of gross absenteeism from his senatorial duties in Washington.)

Wilson, on the other hand, told me that Feinstein actually is "Fritz in skirts," i.e., a Mondale liberal. His early ads blasted her for saying she'd hire state employees according to gender and ethnic quotas. (She did imply that, but recanted.) More recent Wilson ads paint her as a big taxer and spender who left San Francisco with a $172 million budget deficit, while as mayor he modernized San Diego, lowered taxes, and left no deficits. (The truth seems to be that they were both good mayors, raised taxes, built up their cities, and balanced their budgets, though their successors encountered major trouble paying for programs they'd started.)

When Feinstein went negative on Wilson, charging him (accurately) with taking campaign contributions from the S&L industry and implying (apparently falsely) that he, like Democratic Senator Alan Cranston, did improper favors for the industry, Wilson hit back with charges of McCarthyism. Feinstein got bad press and lost ground, especially among older women, a key undecided group. Wilson then broadcast a set of low-blow ads (for which he seems to have suffered not at all) that made Feinstein out to be a kind of Jewish Geraldine Ferraro—a woman beholden to a husband involved in shady business dealings.

Wilson has repeatedly demanded to see the corporate tax returns and client lists of Feinstein's husband, investor Richard Blum, who has lent $3 million to her campaign. Wilson's ads claimed that the couple "own" an S&L that received a "sweetheart deal" from the federal government. (Feinstein told me she and her husband had a total interest in the S&L of 5 percent.) Wilson has distributed news clips containing unsubstantiated claims that Blum-connected investors (including the billionaire Bass brothers of Texas) got special favors from San Francisco city officials while Feinstein was mayor. She flatly denies knowledge of or favoritism for her husband's business partners.

Wilson's ad man is Larry McCarthy, who created the infamous Willie Horton spot for an independent committee supporting George Bush in 1988. This year the Wilson campaign seems on the cusp of racially charged imagery, with the powerful black state Assembly Speaker, Willie Brown, in the Horton role. Brown has the highest disapproval ratings of any state politician. His picture hasn't appeared in an ad yet, but Wilson literature regularly portrays Feinstein as dominated by Brown and bound to do his bidding in Sacramento. Indeed, the two are allies, but the Wilson campaign charges he will be "vice governor" if Feinstein is elected.

It's valid to charge that Feinstein and Brown would likely work together to gerrymander legislative districts and congressional seats after the 1990 census, securing for Democrats as many of the state's six or seven new places in Washington as possible. It's also valid to make an issue of Brown's apparent role in securing Feinstein the teacher's union endorsement, and her abandonment of education reform positions. But the Wilson campaign also charges in print—not in TV ads, yet—that Brown would block Feinstein from pushing tough laws against rape and other crimes through the state Assembly judiciary committee. Thus the subliminal Willie Horton connection: the lady can't fight rape because this big black guy is in the way.

So where has this got us? Feinstein has spent more time on the defensive than Wilson has, and has had to use precious resources to rebuild her image after Wilson attacks. Three groups of voters are pivotal—white male Reagan Democrats, women Republicans, and older women undecideds. Both candidates try to impress the first group by emphasizing their anti-crime positions, which are equally tough, while Wilson implies that Feinstein remains a risky choice. Both candidates say they are "pro-choice," but Feinstein asserts that she will veto any restriction on abortion, and that because Wilson favors parental consent for minors and opposes federal funding for abortions, his position actually is "multiple choice." Both candidates also proclaim themselves to be "caring," emphasizing proposals to enhance child health and preschool education.

Feinstein's major success in putting Wilson on the defensive has been with the "absenteeism" issue. Her ads charge that he has the worst attendance record in

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the U.S. Senate, and note that he once was carried onto the Senate floor on a stretcher to vote for a freeze on Social Security benefits, but has recently missed votes on abortion and the Souter Supreme Court nomination. Her attacks forced him to fly back to Washington for the federal budget debate, helping reinforce her portrayal of him as an incumbent Washington politician while she is the "outsider" and apostle of "change." In fact, both of them are career politicians. She was a public officeholder for eighteen years, and he has been one for twenty-four years.

Nearing the election, the Field and *LA Times* polls show Wilson leading by five points and one point, respectively. They indicate that Feinstein is perceived as liberal, but is backed by those who want "change." Wilson, also espousing change while exuding moderation, is seen, narrowly, as the stronger leader. In the final days, the Feinstein campaign is planning to link Wilson to the "drift" of the outgoing eight-year governorship of conservative Republican George Deukmejian, although experts say the ploy won't work because Deukmejian's and Wilson's differences (on abortion, the environment, and social spending) are well known to voters.

The Wilson campaign is concealing the late hits it may be planning, but if Willie Brown's picture appears on screen, it will be a signal that Wilson is worried. It's a fair bet that growth management and education won't be the issues on which this election hinges, even though they are what matter most to the future of California. •

The farfetched case for teenage motherhood.

POOR CONCEPTIONS

By Ann Hulbert

A year ago Toni Morrison endorsed teenage motherhood as a laudable aspiration for black girls. A quarter of black babies are born to teenagers, most of them unmarried, but she suggested that all the talk about a crisis was mere white bourgeois worry. Morrison celebrated the generative values of her people, and volunteered her baby-sitting services so that teenage mothers could be superwomen—successful professionals as well as devoted parents. "I want to take them all in my arms and say, 'Your baby is beautiful and so are you and, honey, you can do it. And when you want to be a brain surgeon, call me—I will take care of your baby.' "

Now a similar spirit of revisionism seems to have surfaced in, of all places, social research about teenage pregnancy. "I would like to go on record today in opposition to the view that teen childbearing is self-destructive, irrational, or anti-social behavior," Arline T. Geronimus, an assistant professor at the University of Michigan, announced earlier this year in a symposium, "Teenage Pregnancy: Invention or Epidemic?" at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Her paper, which immediately caused a stir, set out to undermine the conventional notion that adolescent parenthood among poor black girls poses any special threat to the health of the babies or to the economic prospects of the parents.

At roughly the same time Frank Furstenberg Jr., a sociologist, presented a surprising report on his twenty-year study of a group of black teenage mothers in Baltimore, "[challenging] the popular belief that the offspring of teenage mothers are themselves destined to become adolescent parents." Another study disputed the view that young mothers routinely drop out of school.

"Studies Cause Confusion on Impact of Teen-Age Pregnancy," *The New York Times* admitted, but the general press response has been to give the new assessments of teenage pregnancy an encouraging spin. "Breaking the Poverty Cycle" was *Newsweek*'s headline on its story about Furstenberg's study, and the caption to the accompanying photograph of a young mother and her baby sounded almost like an ad for early parenthood: "Another chance: Young motherhood doesn't have to mean welfare dependency." A feature story in *Insight*, the magazine supplement of the conservative *Washington Times* newspaper, argued that concern about preventing teenage parenthood has blown the problem out of proportion. Citing the recent studies, the piece sounded comparatively unperturbed about early parenthood; if anything, there was a tone of slight impatience with immature middle-class youth who take so long to grow up.

A sudden re-evaluation of teenage parenthood challenges more than a decade's worth of well-entrenched social programs. Or it would if the revisionism were as new or as upbeat as it looks at first glance. It isn't. To the extent that the studies offer a useful perspective, that perspective isn't new—and it certainly isn't encouraging. The bleak message underlying the recent research echoes the most sober analysis that emerged in the 1980s: when girls face dismal prospects to begin with, adding a baby doesn't necessarily make the future much more dismal.

Yet Geronimus, who has taken center stage in the recent reconsiderations of teenage pregnancy, is eager to make a more extreme case for what risks sounding like complacency. She isn't content to argue merely that early parenthood does little further harm to poor black teenagers. She tries to show that it is actually healthier and financially smarter for them to hurry up and have babies. But questionable statistics undermine her medical claim, and wishful thinking skews her economic analysis.

To support her view that there is no health benefit in

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postponing pregnancy, Geronimus points to some unexpected rates of black neonatal mortality (death within the first month). According to her tables, those rates are actually lower among babies born to black teenagers than among those born to black women in their 20s. She suggests that this is because disadvantage takes a rapid toll on poor women's overall health, making pregnancy and childbirth more precarious. She draws the iconoclastic conclusion: poor black girls have a reason to have babies young.

But Geronimus's argument runs ahead of her numbers, which are drawn from only three states in the late 1970s. More recent national figures show neonatal mortality rates among the babies of black women in their 20s declining slightly from teenage rates, not increasing. There may be some women whose health deteriorates radically, but the group is very small. And as Karen Pittman, formerly of the Children's Defense Fund, has pointed out, overall infant mortality rates (death within the first year) show an even more dramatic drop. Among blacks and whites alike, the babies of older mothers are significantly healthier than those of teenagers.

Geronimus's other main argument is that poor black teenage mothers reap the benefits of extended families. Unlike older mothers, who are more likely to be struggling on their own, she maintains, adolescents with babies rarely set up house alone. Again, she strains to make an extreme case. During the years when care of a child is the most time consuming, a teenage mother can draw on the resources not only of her own family, she says, but also of the family of her baby's father (who is almost never her husband). She argues that young mothers are then better poised to enter the work force in their 20s, when they are more productive and their children, now past infancy, are less dependent and more helpful.

But Geronimus's invocation of the supportive extended family is out of date. She draws on studies championing the black family and its adaptive strengths that flowered in the late '60s and early '70s. Even back then romanticization often skewed the anthropology. The fact is that absent fathers have been the problem all along, hardly part of the solution, and the other kin who once could be counted on to help are much less in evidence today. Eight years ago Eleanor Holmes Norton was already warning that "the marvelously protective extended family units that were as strong among blacks as among any group in this country are not widespread enough today to give the children of young and poor single mothers the chance they must have for a decent life."

There is a curious fatalism implied in Geronimus's revisionism, which leads her to overlook two key questions about teenage childbearing. In her search for medical proof in neonatal mortality rates, she fails to consider the long-term fate of these infants: How likely are they to end up as young parents themselves? And in emphasizing the role of kin in helping young mothers cope with dim work prospects, she pays little attention to the role of education: How likely are teenage mothers to finish high school?

At first it looks as though other researchers have come up with answers to these questions that nicely reinforce Geronimus's argument. Studies by Dawn M. Upchurch and James McCarthy emphasize that teenage mothers have made real educational gains over the last decade (thanks not least to legislation that took effect in 1975 making it illegal for schools receiving federal funds to expel pregnant students or girls with babies). One unexpected and much touted new finding is that girls who are enrolled in high school when they give birth are just as likely to graduate as girls without babies. Yet many drop out *before* they have babies. And among them, having a baby cuts in half their chances of eventually graduating. Overall, only 60 percent of mothers 17 or younger graduate from high school—compared with 90 percent of women who wait until their 20s to have children.

In Furstenberg's two-decade study of the prospects of black women who became teenage mothers in the 1960s, he found that nearly two-thirds of their daughters postponed having babies until they were 19 or older. But as he himself emphasized, becoming a teenage mother in the 1980s is a much bleaker proposition than it was in the 1960s. The second-generation mothers are much less likely to be married (14 percent, compared with 60 percent), much less likely to be in contact with or receive support from unmarried fathers, much more likely to be on welfare (60 percent, compared with 31 percent), much more likely to have failed a grade, and less likely to be either employed or in school. "Today's teenage parents," Furstenberg predicted, "may be less likely to overcome the handicaps associated with early childbearing than were their parents. A greater fraction are at risk of long-term welfare dependence, and their offspring may, in turn, be raised in more disadvantageous family circumstances."

Far from offering reassurance, the revisionist studies are a sobering reminder that teenage childbearing is not simply a cause of poverty, it is also a symptom of it, an understandable response to a lack of alternatives. In particular, it's important to recognize how few *dis*incentives are at work steering the most disadvantaged girls away from having babies. Low aspirations and limited opportunities, and welfare to fall back on, make it easy to drift into early parenthood. Longer-term prospects (if they consider them at all) may also do little to deter girls from babies: one study recently turned up suggestive evidence that poor black girls who become teenage mothers may not end up earning much less in their 20s than similar women who waited to have children.

But that's not the same as saying that girls are acting in response to clear incentives, as Geronimus implies in maintaining that early parenthood is "strategically timed," a well-planned response to "economic and la-

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bor force realities facing poor, black American women." And it's certainly not the same as suggesting that their choice is a good one, which is the impression she conveys in arguing that teenage parenthood is not "self-destructive" but "rational."

It's unfortunately true that teenagers in the ghetto, with or without babies, all too often have little hope of rising above their circumstances. That means that efforts to discourage teenage parenthood are bound to be elusive. And since early motherhood is only one symptom of poverty, preventing it won't necessarily rescue a teenager from a life of hardship: telling these girls that they can become brain surgeons if only they postpone having babies is not much more responsible than Morrison's message that they can do both. But the exhortation to wait clearly has the right emphasis, and is directed at an audience that is, ironically, too often overlooked: girls who haven't yet had babies. One thing the revisionist wave indirectly shows is that those teenagers need much more than lectures about birth control. They need a real stake in postponing children. The new research ought to refocus attention on them, rather than try to convince us that their choices don't matter. •

Eastern Europe's nationalist hangover.

THE TWO FACES OF EASTERN EUROPE

By Adam Michnik

WARSAW

From Romania to Germany, from Tallinn to Belgrade, a major historical process—the death of communism—is taking place. The German Democratic Republic does not exist anymore as a separate state. And the former GDR will serve as the first measure of the price a post-Communist society has to pay for entering the normal European orbit. What price, moreover, will the old Federal Republic, a normal European state with a parliamentary democracy and a market economy, pay for its absorption of a post-Communist creature? In Yugoslavia we will see a different test: whether the federation can survive without communism, and whether the nations of Yugoslavia will want to exist as a federation. (On a larger scale, we will witness the same process in the Soviet Union.)

One thing seems common to all these countries: dictatorship has been defeated and freedom has won, yet the victory of freedom has not yet meant the triumph of democracy. Democracy is something more than freedom. Democracy is freedom institutionalized, freedom submitted to the limits of the law, freedom functioning as an object of compromise between the major political forces on the scene.

We have freedom, but we still have not achieved the democratic order. That is why this freedom is so fragile. In the years of democratic opposition to communism, we supposed that the easiest thing would be to introduce changes in the economy. In fact, we thought that the march from a planned economy to a market economy would take place within the framework of the *nomenklatura* system, and that the market within the Communist state would explode the totalitarian structures. Only then would the time come to build the institutions of a civil society; and only at the end, with the completion of the market economy and the civil society, would the time of great political transformations finally arrive.

The opposite happened. First came the big political change, the great shock, which either broke the monopoly and the principle itself of Communist Party rule or simply pushed the Communists out of power. Then came the creation of civil society, whose institutions were created in great pain, and which had trouble negotiating the empty space of freedom. And only then, as the third moment of change, the final task was undertaken: that of transforming the totalitarian economy into a normal economy where different forms of ownership and different economic actors will live one next to the other.

Today we are in a typical moment of transition. No one can say where we are headed. The people of the democratic opposition have the feeling that we won. We taste the sweetness of our victory the same way the Communists, only yesterday our prison guards, taste the bitterness of their defeat. And yet, even as we are conscious of our victory, we feel that we are, in a strange way, losing. In Bulgaria the Communists have won the parliamentary elections and will govern the country, without losing their social legitimacy. In Romania the National Salvation Front, largely dominated by people from the old Communist *nomenklatura*, has won. In other countries democratic institutions seem shaky, and the political horizon is cloudy. The masquerade goes on: dozens of groups and parties are created, each announces similar slogans, each accuses its adversaries

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of all possible sins, and each declares itself the representative of the national interest. Personal disputes are more important than disputes over values. Arguments over labels are fiercer than arguments over ideas.

All of this constitutes a real threat to the nascent democratic order. The years of Communist oppression taught us an acquired helplessness. We are helpless in our inability to articulate our interests, to defend our values, to distinguish ourselves from others, and to coexist with what is different.

We all agree that we are returning to "Europe." But what does that mean? Here in Poland, it does not mean a reorientation of the great currents of our culture; there is no need for Czeslaw Milosz, Leszek Kolakowski, Andrzej Wajda, Witold Lutoslawski, Tadeusz Konwicki, or Zbigniew Herbert to return to Europe, because in a spiritual sense they never left. And yet the crashing down of the Iron Curtain must have its consequences in culture too. The language that will be used by a culture that is ridding itself of the totalitarian corset will make use of different ideas and different obsessions than a culture that has been free of this corset for the last forty-five years. This dialogue of experiences can enrich Europe. And in this dialogue we, the people of post-Communist Europe, will be the ones who give more than we take. What we will give is the experience of living in ambiguity, the experience of living on a border.

Does the return to Europe mean also the return to a market economy? All of us know how to switch from a market economy to a planned totalitarian economy. Nobody knows how to switch from a totalitarian economy to a market economy, from a monopoly of state ownership to a plurality of economic subjects. As we say in Poland, we have to distinguish between an aquarium and fish soup. The difference, of course, is that you can make fish soup out of an aquarium, but you cannot make an aquarium out of fish soup. It is impossible to return the dead to life, yet this is precisely what we have to do. We have to do it without any historical precedents, and without individuals who know how to act in a normally functioning market, and in a society that has lost all the habits of entrepreneurial activity. The road to the market must lead through poverty and unemployment. Neither the institutions of the state nor the people themselves are psychologically prepared to struggle with reality of this sort.

The enemy of this evolution will be populism. Communism put into our heads the conviction that we are equal, that each one of us has the right to the same things. It did not matter that this very communism was betraying its own egalitarian declarations. We recalled, from Communist propaganda, that we all have the same stomachs, and that these stomachs have the right to the same stuff. We remembered that the state is supposed to guarantee us work and medical benefits, and we learned to blame the state for everything and to demand everything from the state, because the state, by assuming full power over people, assumed full responsibility. The state was like a prison warden who is empowered to keep people behind bars, but is expected to provide each one of them with a bowl of soup a day. Today all these ideas are exploding around us. And the price for the past is being paid by, among others, the government that emerged from Solidarity.

We say market, we say reprivatization. But that market has many names. If, after the dogmatic faith in the benefits of the planned economy, there comes an equally dogmatic faith in the benefits of the market, then we are in trouble. Because the market is to the economy what freedom is to democracy: a primary condition. But the market is not a self-activated mechanism that can replace the economic policy of the state and the economic activity of the people. The market has several names. We know the difference between the market as it is seen by Milton Friedman and the market with a human face as it is perceived by, say, the leaders of Swedish social democracy.

The cult of the market will lead to the great triumph of Friedmanism. But what does it mean to be Chicago Boys in a post-Communist country? It can mean a certain particular economic practice—that is, the determination to pursue a reform of relations of ownership. But it also can mean a glorification of egoism, a contempt for the weak and the poor, a disrespect for Christian options in defense of the most disadvantaged. In this, by the way, lies the paradox of the Solidarity movement. On the one hand, we opt for the market and for reprivatization. On the other, the upheaval in Poland was the creation of striking workers of precisely the huge industrial enterprises that are the least profitable, the ones that will have to be closed down.

The problem of the market is closely associated with the problem of political culture. We had no time and no place to learn this culture. Before the market, we are like barbarians. We respond to the threat with a conscious abdication of thinking, and a preference for social demagoguery. A populist is ready to promise everything to everyone, but is only able to jail everyone for everything once he takes power. Political culture, the ability to make different currents live side by side, implies the conviction that pluralism is a value in itself, that adversarial or conflicting attitudes enrich each other if the rules of the game are respected. Political culture is the ability to hold a dialogue, the renunciation of invective and hatred in political struggle, the staunch attempt to find compromises where the situation is complex.

Poland is a Catholic country. The overwhelming majority of Poles consider themselves Catholic. At the same time Poland is a pluralist society, where different ideas and perceptions coexist. Poles are indebted to the Catholic Church for saving their spiritual and national identity, for protecting them against Communist repression. But now the same Church finds itself in a totally new situation. It learned how to defend itself against communism, but it has not yet learned, because it had no time to learn, how to live with pluralism, how

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to exist in a democratic state.

The first answers that the Catholic Church in Poland has provided to the question of how to live in a pluralistic society make us wonder. What is the demand for an anti-abortion law, if not an attempt to inscribe in the penal code an approach derived directly from the Church's teachings? Every Catholic knows that abortion is murder, and one cannot blame the bishops for teaching what they have been taught. A bishop who renounces the struggle for God's law ceases to be a Catholic priest. But one may ask whether in a pluralist society God's law should be enforced by the police and the penal code. One may ask whether the protection of the unborn should be effected by means of discussion with the faithful or by means of discussion with a policeman and a prosecutor.

The same goes for the teaching of religion in schools. It was a totalitarian barbarity to forbid the bringing up of children in a Catholic way and to ban religious instruction in schools. Yet the attempt to impose religious instruction on all children, believers and non-believers, by means of a state decree, is also authoritarian. A post-Communist society, because it is post-Communist, is by nature not a particularly tolerant society. One may be permitted to ask whether the attempt to teach religion in schools will not lead to intolerance against the non-Catholic minority.

The argument that Catholicism is essentially tolerant, which is precisely what some bishops argue, does not convince me. I know of no examples of Catholic pulpits in Poland condemning any other intolerance except the intolerance against Catholics. Is this a repetition, then, of the situation presented in the famous formula of Montalembert: "When I am in the minority, I demand rights for myself, because you set the rules, and when I am in the majority, I deprive you of your rights, because I set the rules"? Life in a pluralist society means an ability to limit oneself, a conviction that such self-limitation is necessary, that without it an ecumenical society (to use the pointed phrase of Tadeusz Mazowiecki) cannot exist. My question is: How will our Catholic bishops manage to become part of a pluralist, tolerant, and ecumenical society? By what means will the Church limit itself and respect these limits?

For a nascent democracy, the trap is nationalism, which has exploded together with freedom. Nationalism is a deformed reaction to the need for independence, a need that was violated by communism. Nationalism is a degenerate reaction, because it rests on contempt for other cultures that is stronger than the love for one's own.

In the time immediately after communism, nationalism is a way of getting rid of the responsibility for communism. Look how easy it is to say, if you are Russian, that communism in Russia was the work of foreigners, Jews, Poles, or Latvians. How easy it is, if you are Polish, to say that it is all the fault of Russians, if you are Romanian to say that it is all the fault of Hungarians, if you are Hungarian to say that it is all the fault of Jews. Nationalism is not the idea of freedom for the individual, it is the idea of a national state: Russia for the Russians, Poland for the Poles. Nationalism means an exclusive conception of the nation, because the enemy is first of all the other nation, and then the cosmopolitans within one's own.

We should remember that the accusations of cosmopolitanism and nationalism were the two favorite tricks of Communist propaganda. The accusation of nationalism was provoked by the demand for independence and national identity; the accusation of cosmopolitanism, by the demand for universal thinking and the urge for closer links with Europe. Post-Communist nationalism also abhors cosmopolitanism, because this nationalism is an articulation of a hidden fear of European normality, of European standards of tolerance and European democracy, of an order in which you have to renounce your own xenophobia, because, like stinking shoes, it is not allowed at a European table.

One should add, however, that this dilemma now faced by the societies of post-Communist Europe—to go toward Europe or to look for one's own way according to a nationalist formula—is not by any means an invented dilemma. It is a question facing all societies that are conscious of their own backwardness. The solution still awaits all of our societies. It might turn out that the return to Europe will be as difficult as it will be costly, that Europe will not want to accept its poor relatives. And the anti-European reaction will become a nationalist megalomania, a bizarre mixture of megalomania with a feeling of not being sufficiently valued.

Simply speaking, this post-Communist Europe of ours is rent by a great conflict of two spiritual cultures. One of these cultures says, Let us join Europe and let us respect European standards, while the other says, Let us go back to our own national roots and build an order according to our national particularity. They are spiritual, rather than political, camps, and they express themselves as a dispute over culture, not politics.

Post-Communist Europe has entered the second phase of its anti-totalitarian revolution. The first phase was a struggle for freedom, for the overthrow of communism. The second phase has turned into a struggle for power and revenge. Every revolution has its logic, and every one has the tendency to devour its own children. If the logic of compromise between the main political actors prevails, a democratic order will prevail. If the logic of revenge wins, we will face the hell of dictatorship. We can choose a normal European order, a world of normal conflicts and normal human compromises, a varied world that is, because of its variety, also dangerous. Or we can choose an authoritarian state, a nationalism that rejects a pluralist culture, an order that gives up on religious tolerance, a strong quasi-dictatorial power that offers, as a solution to the common poverty, a populist envy and a chauvinism that distorts the human face with hatred.

—translated by Anna Husarska

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

From the Present, From the Past

Reviewing Aki Kaurismäki's *Ariel* last August, a film that suddenly put Finland on the contemporary cinema map, I asked two questions. Do all Finns understand English? (We saw a Bogart clip being shown on Finnish TV without subtitles.) Do all Finns smoke a lot? (Cigarettes fumed furiously throughout.)

Matti Forss of Espoo, Finland, has kindly written to answer my questions. Most Finns, he says, do not understand English well enough to understand Bogart pictures; all films have Finnish and Swedish subtitles. (It's a bilingual country.) So this Bogart clip, we can assume, was just one more disregard of fact in a realistic fairy tale. As for the other query, Forss says every Finn does not smoke like the hero of *Ariel*. In fact, cigarette advertising is forbidden in Finland. Yet people do smoke—women more than men, youngsters more than grown-ups. Says Forss, "You explain that!"

I can't, but perhaps Kaurismäki can. Two of his subsequent films were shown at the recent New York Film Festival, and he appeared after the press screening to answer questions. Most of them were at the usual abysmal level. Kaurismäki, bottle of beer in hand, self-deprecatingly confident, handled them all quite well, often wittily, in adequate English. Someone asked why, in his films, ashes on cigarettes were allowed to get so long. He replied that in Finland people are so happy that they forget to watch their cigarettes and flick the ashes. A perfect press conference answer, I thought. I wish I had known then about Forss's quandary; I'd like to have heard Kaurismäki answer.

The two films shown at the festival, neither of which is yet announced for release here, were **The Match Factory Girl** (1989) and **I Hired a Contract Killer** (1990). The first, set in Helsinki, is about a teenage girl who lives with her uncaring family, a slave of theirs and of the industrial system—she is on the soul-deadening assembly line of a match factory. One evening she meets a well-to-do young man in a bar and goes off with him. When she tries to see him again, he shunts her away. When she writes him that she is pregnant, he sends her a check for an abortion. She then buys rat poison, possibly thinking of suicide, but she decides to use it on rats. Only those who are responsive to Kaurismäki's astringent style—a style that clings to naturalistic detail as it contradictorily spins fairy tales—will believe that this is a comedy. (The title itself echoes a previous fairy tale—Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Match Girl*.)

The other film is set in London and is spoken entirely in English, even by the leading man, Jean-Pierre Léaud, familiar from many Truffaut and Godard films. (Kaurismäki has said somewhere that he once played a small film part and imitated Léaud; his directorial debt to Godard—in nonchalance even more than in style—is patent.) Léaud is a clerk in the London Waterworks who is dismissed after fifteen years' service and despondently tries suicide. (Again!—again in a comedy.) He fails, then hires a contract killer to knock him off, falls in love, and tries to cancel the contract. This film, too, is done in a style that deals wittily—and, in plot terms, arbitrarily—with sordidness, a style that David Lynch attempts less successfully.

In that press conference Kaurismäki, serious for a moment, said that a chief influence on him was Robert Bresson. Without overreading, this influence can be sensed in these two films—an untidy secular *Mouchette*, a somewhat more untidy *Pickpocket*. But the Bresson touch is much less apparent in **Leningrad Cowboys Go America** (Orion Classics), made in 1989, which is being shown here. (This is his ninth feature in ten years. It's obviously impossible for him—at least at his present age—to do anything but buzz along breezily.)

Here the obvious household god is Jim Jarmusch, and lest there be any doubt, Jarmusch himself plays the small part of a secondhand car dealer. Everything about this picture is wildly, sometimes amusingly, unbelievable. A band of musicians, called the Leningrad Cowboys, all wear suits and ties and white shirts and wigs (supposed to be their own hair) of one huge lock combed forward like a unicorn's prong. They play an audition for a possible agent in a hut far above the Arctic Circle. The agent rejects them but gives them the address of another agent in New York.

They arrive in Manhattan, bringing their guitar player who was frozen stiff and is in a wooden box with his guitar sticking out through a hole. This agent gives them an address in Mexico where they can play a wedding. They buy a jalopy from Jarmusch, start south, have adventures—some of them on Jarmusch

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Dreams. *Half of a good Kurosawa picture. Eight episodes, based on eight of his dreams, only the first four of which are up to his alpine level. (Reviewed 10/8/90)* **The Icicle Thief.** *Maurizio Nichetti, Italian author-actor-director, in a beguiling fantasy-satire about 1950s neorealism and the lush TV color of today. (10/1/90)* **Life and Nothing But.** *Bertrand Tavernier is one of the best directors alive. This humanist drama, about post-World War I identification of French casualties, is wonderfully made. If only the writing were equally well-realized. (10/15/90)* **Postcards from the Edge.** *Meryl Streep and Shirley MacLaine, as Hollywood daughter and mother, give this tenuous comedy-drama sparkle. (10/8/90)* **—SK**

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turf (Memphis)—play the Mexican date, and make a hit that leads to a future. It helps that, en route, the band has switched from corn to rock and the guitar player has thawed.

This is the first Kaurismäki film I've seen that tries overtly to be funny; in the others, the humor seeps through the seriousness. *Leningrad Cowboys* isn't funny enough. Often, the joke stops somewhere up there on the screen and doesn't quite reach us. On the evidence so far, Kaurismäki has to be telling a somber tale wickedly, has in some degree to be mocking the very fact that he is telling a dark story, in order to amuse.

But of prodigal, high-handed talent he has no lack. (And he has a filmmaking brother whose work hasn't yet been shown here.)

Randall Jarrell's best-known poem is "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," and its best-known line is "From my mother's sleep I fell into the State." Out of a number of such sleeps have fallen the crew members of the **Memphis Belle** (Warner Bros.), an account of the twenty-fifth and final bombing mission of a B-17 over Germany in 1943. I can't remember another World War II aviation film in which such emphasis was put on the youth—the very boyishness—of the crew.

The co-producer, Catherine Wyler, is the daughter of William Wyler, who made a wartime documentary of the actual *Memphis Belle*. That's interesting, but it's an insufficient reason to take us down an old fiction-film route once again. The script is stale, in shape if not in detail: the boorish p.r. officer who is slavering to exploit the crew's success, the gimmicks—a dog, a poem, a Brownie camera—planted early so that they can be exploited later. Frame by frame we trace familiar patterns that remind us much more of Hollywood than of the courage of the men who fought the air war. I'd much rather have seen Wyler's documentary.

In the cast, only Matthew Modine as the captain is notable, and only because, as in the current *Pacific Heights*, he seems to be getting more and more lightweight.

One point, not necessarily mean-spirited. A title at the end says that the film is dedicated to all the brave young men, of whatever nationality, who lost their lives in the air war. This seems to me just a bit unduly chivalric. Of course there were brave young men on the Axis side; but they were killing our brave young men and were doing it in defense of, among a great many other horrors, Dachau. I'm willing to wait another century or two for the objectivity to salute the Luftwaffe. •

The liberal news from Paris.

The Rescue of Humanism

BY ALEXANDER NEHAMAS

Until recently, Martin Heidegger's philosophy attracted and repelled, with equal intensity, a large number of American readers. To his admirers, Heidegger was one of the great philosophers in history, the thinker who understood most clearly the impasse that Western technological civilization is supposed to have reached, who may have had a glimpse, if only dimly, of another world. To his detractors, Heidegger was an obscurantist with an odious political past, with a talent for coining impenetrable neologisms that appear to display deep understanding but really serve only as a barrier to systematic, rational criticism.

Heidegger and Modernity
by Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut
translated by Franklin Philip
(University of Chicago Press,
136 pp., $16.95)

French Philosophy of the Sixties: An Essay on Antihumanism
by Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut
translated by Mary H. S. Cattani
(University of Massachusetts Press,
264 pp., $35, $13.95 paper)

Political Philosophy I: Rights, The New Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns
by Luc Ferry
translated by Franklin Philip
(University of Chicago Press,
160 pp., $21)

L'ère de l'individu: Contribution à une histoire de la subjectivité
by Alain Renaut
(Gallimard, 312 pp., Fr 115)

Was he a genius? Was he a fraud? This rather boring debate has finally been left behind. Though Heidegger is still a suspicious figure to a number of American philosophers, his reputation has gradually become firm and his authority broad. Now his admirers seem to outnumber his detractors. The fact is that Heidegger has arrived in America. This is due partly to some connections between his thought and American pragmatism, particularly his view that practice precedes theory. It is a central thesis of *Being and Time* (1927) that our fundamental interactions with the world are practical and essentially unreflective, as long as everything functions as expected; we become reflective, theoretical, when things begin to break down, and we need to understand them in order to fix them. More important, Heidegger's increasing respectability is due to the dissemination of postwar French thought, on which his influence has been seminal. As Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu, Louis Althusser, and Jacques Lacan have come to be studied seriously, Heidegger, whose disgust with modernity lurks behind their own adversarial thinking, has come to be read more positively by American readers than ever before.

In France, however, the fate of Heidegger's reputation has been changing. The tables have been turned. As a result of a general change in the philosophical atmosphere, and in the wake of a number of revelations about Heidegger's politics in Nazi Germany, the question is now whether one should be allied with him at all, philosophically or politically. In the aftermath of the 1960s, Foucault and the other authors of his generation became almost canonical figures in Paris, but by the early 1980s an intellectual and political backlash against them began to emerge. As the Socialists gained control of the government, the intellectuals moved away from the left, toward the center and the right. Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut are important figures in this new movement. *French Philosophy of the Sixties* appeared in 1985. It contains a spirited defense of the accomplishments of liberal democracy in the West and a sustained attack against "the thought of '68," whose distrust of liberalism Ferry and Renaut attribute to the influence of an "antihumanism" inherited from Heidegger and, to a lesser extent, from Marx.

Ferry and Renaut believe that the wholesale rejection of modernity and democracy that Heidegger advocated is

ALEXANDER NEHAMAS is Carpenter Professor of the Humanities at Princeton University.

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profoundly mistaken. They argue, as we shall see, that "antihumanism," in eliminating the very idea of the human subject, also eliminates the possibility of the existence of basic rights, which belong to human beings precisely because they are human. They are firm believers in such rights, which they describe as one of the great "promises of modernity." But they are not simply defenders of democracy, they are also its critics. They claim that "the democratic world endlessly makes promises that it does not keep," and they propose to criticize that world in the name of those very promises. Their criticism, however, unlike the rejectionism of the Heideggerians, is meant to be internal: it upholds the goals of democracy, but it demonstrates how far we still are from meeting them.

The contemporary recoil from Heidegger and his influence has not been only conceptual. Heidegger had never been known as an admirer of democracy, but it was not until 1987, when Victor Farias's *Heidegger and Nazism* appeared, that the issue of the extent and the systematic nature of his involvement with National Socialism took center stage. Farias's book established beyond any doubt that Heidegger's involvement with the Nazis was far deeper and longer than the notorious ten months when he was rector of the University of Freiburg. He remained a dues-paying member of the party, and maintained ties, political and ideological, with a number of leading Nazi figures. Worse, perhaps, he never really saw his attitude or his behavior as a serious error.

The main thesis of Ferry and Renaut's *Heidegger and Modernity*, which appeared in France in 1988, is that Heidegger's criticism of modernity—indeed, his criticism of the whole history of "the West"—is rooted in his authoritarian, nostalgic, right-wing politics. Such a politics, they argue, was extraordinarily ill-suited to the radical, left-wing, and utopian uses to which Heidegger's French followers put it:

> We cannot overestimate the amount of political purification that went into the translation of Heidegger's philosophy into a leftist intellectual context.... Until a few months ago [they wrote in 1988] Heideggerianism made it possible to hang onto ... the crepuscular task of salvaging thought from the general collapse of humanity into American-style businessism.

Heidegger believed that democracy and technology, the two central institutions of modernity, correspond closely to one another. Technology turns what had been prerogatives of the few into necessities for the many. The power over nature that technology gives each individual is translated, in political terms, into the power within society that democracy allows us. Both technology and democracy place individual human beings in the center of the world. They are, in that sense, "humanist." (For Heidegger, their "humanism" was precisely the problem.)

Ferry and Renaut's own attitude toward technology and mass culture is not at all unlike Heidegger's. They wish to drive a wedge, however, between the contempt for technology and mass culture and the denial of democratic politics. They consider it part of "the tragic side of modernity" that it is associated with "the emergence of the world of pure technology and its consequent transformation of culture into industrial mass culture." They believe that their criticism and Heidegger's can share the same "object," that is, technology and mass culture, but they insist that their "purpose" and his do not overlap.

Heidegger's main philosophical weapon in his criticism of modernity and democracy, they argue, was his "antihumanism," his conviction that human beings neither know nor control their basic nature and desires. In *L'ère de l'individu*, Renaut has offered a philosophical diagnosis of the origins and the nature of antihumanism. The book develops in great detail some ideas only briefly alluded to in *French Philosophy of the Sixties*. It traces the notion of the individual back to Leibniz, and charts its progressive liberation from all constraint from Berkeley to Nietzsche. And it supports the controversial view that the continued growth of individualism ends in nothing short of the dissolution of the idea of the subject: when no limits are anywhere acknowledged, the notion of autonomy, which always places one in relation to people or to norms, also disappears. Thus Renaut concludes that two of the main features of modern philosophical thought, usually considered to be part of a single strain, finally cancel each other out. Modernity does not only give rise to the idea of the subject, as Heidegger believed. It also, paradoxically, leads to its disappearance. To some extent, then, antihumanism is part of the modern tradition itself.

Ferry, meanwhile, has constructed a very ambitious political philosophy. The first of his four volumes on the subject is now available in English. Ferry accepts Leo Strauss's view that the modern conception of value is too relativist, or, as Strauss puts it, too "historicist," that it allows different historical periods to accept different, even contrary, but still equally justified values to support an objective conception of political rights that transcends the differences between particular cultures. But Ferry does not share Strauss's profound contempt for modernity, or his preference for the ancient approach. Just as Renaut turns to Kant for a formulation that ties autonomy to a free respect for constraint, Ferry relies on the German idealist Johann Gottlieb Fichte for the view that we can conceive of ourselves as rational agents who have rights only if we see other people as similar agents with strictly parallel rights. Rights are essentially reciprocal, and they ensure freedom only through the acknowledgment of limits.

Ferry and Renaut's philosophical project is to preserve the most valuable aspect of modernity, the idea of human rights, which are shared by all simply by virtue of the fact that we are human, whatever our particular circumstances. They argue for a new faith in our sovereignty over ourselves, a view that they characterize as a "modest" and "nonmetaphysical" humanism. The articulation of that humanism is the central aim of their many works. Their aim is admirable. And their idea that criticism should only be "internal" or piecemeal, that grand rejections are often nothing more than grand illusions, is deeply right.

French Philosophy of the Sixties, however, is a thoroughly polemical work, which simplifies the positions of its adversaries and overstates its own case. Its central argument is that with the exception of Marx, whose influence in France (though still obvious in Bourdieu, Althusser, and some of Foucault) had already begun to wane by the 1970s, Heidegger has been the single most important influence on the movement represented by the thought of '68, on Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan. Why was Heidegger so important to postwar French thought? And what exactly is the "antihumanism" that underwrites his criticism of modernity?

For a start, it is important to recall that in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, which appeared in 1935, after Heidegger's supposed break with Nazism, he still felt free to write that "from a metaphysical point of view, Russia and America are the same; the same dreary technological frenzy, the same unrestricted organization of the average man." And he concluded:

> We are caught in a pincers. Situated in the center, our nation incurs the severest pressure. It is the nation with the most neighbors and hence the most endangered. With all this, it is the most metaphysical of nations.... All this implies that this na-

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tion . . . must move itself and thereby the history of the West beyond the center of their future "happening" and into the primordial realm of the powers of being.

Now, if one were to forget that the political structure of the nation whose "metaphysical" nature Heidegger is praising was National Socialism, his thought might appear to provide a way of criticizing both great postwar powers at the same time. As a result of such a feat of intellectual acrobatics, one might even think that to reject the individualist and the consumerist madness of the West would not have to imply an endorsement of the totalitarian and bureaucratic insanity of the East. Heidegger, in sum, seemed to offer the devoutly desired middle way: both powers could now be seen as products of the "spiritual decline of the earth" brought about by "the reign of technology." Adversarial intellectuals could use such a purified version of Heidegger to avoid a direct political stand in favor either of the United States or of the Soviet Union.

For Heidegger, moreover, the reign of technology is in its "essence" identical with the essence of "Western metaphysics." And this metaphysics, in turn, is centrally characterized by "humanism." The humanism that Heidegger attacks is the belief that human beings are the ultimate "subjects" of the world, in reference to which all things, or "objects," are thought and classified. It involves two main ideas. First, it holds that the world conforms to the principles that govern our own intellectual life, especially the principles of reason; like the self, therefore, the world contains no irresoluble mysteries. Second, it maintains that, again like our own self, the world is fully consonant with our desires and will; the objects of which it consists are thought to derive what reality they possess from their amenability to our use and exploitation. Things are what we can make of them.

Humanism, in Heidegger's large-scale view of human affairs, began with Plato. Though Plato thought that the Forms, which constituted the most real objects in the world, existed independently and forever, his philosophy, according to Heidegger, still gave pride of place to human beings, because these Forms (or "Ideas") were primarily aspects that things presented to human subjects. By contrast, in some of the fragments of the pre-Socratic philosophers, as in some of Hölderlin's poems—read in Heidegger's idiosyncratic manner, of course—there are revealed the evanescent traces of another, more authentic attitude toward life and the world, traces of a care for them in their own right, a respect for things independent of the uses to which human beings can put them.

Heidegger was not willing (perhaps he was never able) fully to articulate this alternative attitude, which considers nature as a system with its own order and integrity, and the best human life as a harmonious contemplative relationship with it. But he wrote at length against the victory of "metaphysics," the long line of thought that leads from Plato through Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant to Nietzsche. That tradition, in Heidegger's account, conceived of nature only in relation to its usefulness, only as an object of exploitation and mastery. In Descartes, Heidegger conceded, technology and science still aimed at the mastery of nature in order to secure greater freedom and happiness for people, but in Nietzsche mastery became a goal in itself, serving no further purpose. Nietzsche's "will to power," according to Heidegger's controversial but influential interpretation, is a self-perpetuating activity: it is a will that aims at nothing beyond itself, a will to will, no matter its object. "Nature" has ceased to be something in its own right altogether; it is simply raw material to be shaped, a source of resistances whose only function is to provide new opportunities for domination.

Heidegger's high criticisms were easily adaptable to the lower phenomena of modern life. The language of advertising, for example, provides a vulgar but accurate emblem of what Heidegger finds distasteful in modernity. All we are now concerned with is the search for "new and improved" versions of whatever means are already available for attaining whatever goals such means make possible. The value of the goals themselves is irrelevant; the only valuable goal is the endless proliferation of means. What counts is doing things better than before. Whether such things are worth doing in the first place is no longer a question.

According to Heidegger, the blind desire for manipulation came about because modernity turned reason—which was, for the ancients, and even for the medievals, a source of valuable goals—into a purely instrumental faculty. And here, as it turns out, we have a crucial point of contact between Heidegger and the left. The war of the members of the Frankfurt School, especially Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, against "instrumental reason" was as vicious as the war against it that Heidegger waged. And though the changes that the critical theorists advocated led exactly away

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from Heidegger's nostalgic desire for a return to an earlier, more authentic relationship to nature, both they and he were united in their distaste for what they saw as the crudeness and the vulgarity of technological progress and mass culture.

According to Ferry and Renaut, Heidegger and his followers unleashed an uncompromising attack on modernity on the grounds of its humanism, of its thinking of "Man" as the ultimate subject, as "lord and master of the earth." Subjectivity, which is closely connected to humanism, involves personal autonomy on the practical level and self-knowledge on the theoretical. The two levels are connected: that is, a subject knows itself through and through; it contains no opaque or inaccessible parts of the operation of which it remains unaware. The subject is also the absolute master of its decisions, able to make them on its own without interference from any factors over which it has less than perfect control. In view of the fact that external objects obey the same theoretical and practical principles, nature, the totality of things, is completely open to human understanding and manipulation. As the subject is "present" to itself, in knowledge and control, so what is, is "present" to the subject. Indeed, "being present," in this not always intuitive sense, is the mark of what it is to be.

To attack humanism is to deny that a subject conceived in such terms exists, to deny that human beings are fully self-aware and autonomous. According to Ferry and Renaut, Heidegger and his followers dispute, in just this way, the sovereignty of human beings. Permeated or even fully constructed by lines of impersonal power, domination, and normalization (Foucault), by codes whose ability to communicate fully is undermined by their own structure (Derrida), by unconscious forces and desires (Lacan), or by economic and social factors (Bourdieu, Althusser), the human subject is held to be anything but transparent to itself. And what the subject does not know, it cannot control. Autonomy disappears, since apparently free decisions turn out to be effects of these unknown and independent lines of force.

And if the subject is not, in this sense, "present" to itself, there is even less reason to believe that the world is present to it. What things are, therefore, is not necessarily exhausted by their availability for human use and consumption. "Metaphysics"—the dominant mode of thought in the West, according to which to be is to be available for use, and which is therefore in its "essence" identical with "technology," with the systematic manipulation of the world—represents only one possible path of human history.

In the incantatory, almost hieratic language of his late works, Heidegger attempted to evoke what some other relationship to the world might look, feel, or be like. He tried to develop a vocabulary that would embody a "nonmetaphysical" attitude to the world, though he was also aware that any effort to leave metaphysics behind might always appear as just one more metaphysical system. Can an effort to escape the totality of one's tradition avoid being a desire to know and to control the totality of one's history, of one's world? This is, famously, the charge that he himself made against Nietzsche, "the first of the last metaphysicians"; it is the charge that Derrida eventually made against him; and it is the charge that others are now making against Derrida. No doubt they will have it made against them in the future.

I believe that this charge is correct. An attempt to leave one's history and tradition behind, combined with the view that this history is unitary, is bound to fail. For it will necessarily have to preserve some parts of the old tradition as building blocks for the new. And since "metaphysics" permeates the old tradition through and through, it will also infect its successor. Heidegger was haunted by this problem. To solve it, he developed the strange poetic vocabulary of his late works. His hope was that individual words could be liberated, as it were, from their earlier subjection to metaphysics, and that the story they could be used to tell would be free of that subjection. His urging us to turn away from metaphysics as the study of "the being of beings" toward "the question of Being," his calling language "the house of Being" and man "Being's poem," were all parts of his effort to construct a nonmetaphysical language and a nonmetaphysical attitude—an attitude that would place us "at home" on the earth and not at odds with it.

But Heidegger's effort was a failure. Even a home is something we use. It was a failure, moreover, that sometimes seems designed to terrorize those who perceive it as such. For qualifications like "the essential nature of . . . ," "metaphysically," or "the inner truth and greatness of . . . " (in this case, "the inner truth and greatness of" National Socialism, which turns out to be "the encounter between global technology and modern man") suggest that Heidegger is always concerned with a deeper level of whatever he is addressing, and that one's lack of agreement only betrays a lack of understanding and sensitivity.

Heidegger's effort to leave metaphysics behind was based on serious philosophical misreadings, beginning with his tendentious interpretations of the pre-Socratics and culminating in his massive, if brilliant, deformation of Nietzsche. The continuity between the pre-Socratics and Plato is much greater than he ever imagined. And Nietzsche was too canny, too prolific and protean, too aware of the complexity of the tradition that he attacked, to be pinned down as a metaphysician on the basis of a few passages from *The Will to Power*, a haphazard collection of notes edited posthumously by his sister and doggedly interpreted by Heidegger as the skeleton of his major and unfinished work. Heidegger's tendency to consider "Modernity" and "the West" as monolithic structures with a single essence, whether it is "technology" or "metaphysics," also presents a great problem; I doubt that even "technology" designates a single phenomenon. And I believe that the wholesale rejection of one's time, brave and brilliant as it may sometimes be, is bound to lead to nothing. Nothing is left when everything is left behind.

I share, in sum, many of Ferry and Renaut's criticisms of Heidegger, as well as their positive goal of an internal criticism of democracy that does not reject it completely. Still, I cannot escape the feeling that their own positive approach remains too deeply indebted to Heidegger's analysis of modernity. For surely "humanism" is itself as complex and ambiguous a concept as "the West" or "metaphysics" or the others. To characterize oneself as a humanist is not necessarily to be a friend of the human; and to be antihumanist is not necessarily to be its foe. Heidegger's antihumanism, in fact, springs from precisely his sense that it is humanism that has made us slaves of the technology that it fostered and engendered.

Humanism, at its most extreme, is a position that attributes to human beings absolute importance in the universe, absolute freedom from any outside forces in the world, absolute knowledge and control of themselves. It is a little like attributing God's features to his erstwhile creatures (and some of this extreme humanism originated in such a heaven-storming impulse). Antihumanism, at its own extreme, holds that individual human beings are of no consequence in the universe, that they are totally controlled, even constituted, by outside forces (economic, social, sexual) that are the real subjects of history, that they are essentially incapable of seeing themselves for what they are. The two extremes, of course, are at the opposite

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ends of the continuum of the history of philosophy, which contains a large number of positions, differing in the degree of importance, freedom, and self-knowledge they attribute to us. Toward the middle, where individual and social factors begin to merge and to influence one another, it becomes difficult to say exactly to which side a particular position belongs. It could even be that a proper mixture of these factors might constitute a position to which neither label could be correctly applied.

Now Ferry and Renaut believe, again, that Heidegger's main objections to modernity proceed from his particular brand of antihumanism, his belief that technology and democracy have given the individual more power in the world and in society than is appropriate. They agree with him that modernity possesses what they call a "tragic side." This has two aspects. The first is constituted by the erosion of the authority of tradition during modern times. Generally accepted answers to serious questions no longer exist; individuals, however ill-equipped, must answer such questions by themselves. The second aspect, again, is "the emergence of the world of pure technology and its consequent transformation of culture into industrial mass culture."

Ferry and Renaut conclude that these features of modernity explain "how appealing and persuasive Heidegger's criticism" can be. Still, they want a subtler and more complex approach than Heidegger's total rejection of the modern. They insist that some form of humanism is necessary for the preservation of human rights, the nature of which they leave generally unspecified, but which, they believe, the thought of '68 was intent on abandoning:

> Whether conducted in the name of a radiant future [Marx] or a traditionalist reaction [Heidegger], the total critique of the modern world, because it is necessarily an antihumanism that leads inevitably to seeing in the democratic project, for example, in human rights, the prototype of ideology or of the metaphysical illusion, is structurally incapable of taking up, except insincerely and in spite of itself, the promises that are also those of modernity.

Ferry and Renaut insist that "it would be absurd today . . . to attempt philosophically to restore figures of subjectivity whose deconstruction dates . . . at least as far back as Kant." Traditional humanism, the optimistic Enlightenment view that human beings can become complete masters of the world, cannot be recaptured. But its virtues can still be preserved. A more modest criticism is possible. "Between 'collaboration' and external criticism," they ask, "is there really no place for an internal critique?" And they answer that because "the democratic world endlessly makes promises that it does not keep," it is "in the name of these promises . . . that one should perhaps criticize it, in the name of the present."

These are all commendable sentiments. Ferry and Renaut refuse to take a stand outside modernity as a whole. (That is an impossible task, in any case.) They wish to vindicate a moderate humanism, a view that attributes significant but not "absolute" or "metaphysical" autonomy and self-knowledge to human subjects, a view that supplies a solid foundation for human rights.

What is moderate humanism, as Ferry and Renaut understand it? It may be useful to look at an astonishing statement made by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe in his *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, which appeared before Farias's book was published. Discussing Heidegger's active involvement with National Socialism as rector of the University of Freiburg during 1933-34 (a period that he unconvincingly identifies with the extent of Heidegger's cooperation with the Nazis), Lacoue-Labarthe writes:

> Nazism is a humanism insofar as it rests upon a determination of *humanitas* which is, in its view, more powerful . . . than any other. . . . The fact that this subject lacks the universality which apparently defines the *humanitas* of humanity in the received sense, still does not make Nazism an antihumanism.

According to this view, Heidegger, still under the spell of humanism and the residual commitment to "metaphysics" in 1933, was attracted to National Socialism because of the affinities between the movement's humanist philosophy and the intellectual tradition of the West. When Heidegger later left both metaphysics and humanism behind, he also managed, for the same reasons, to abandon National Socialism as well.

"Humanism" is a flexible concept, and Lacoue-Labarthe has here defined it as any view to the effect that there is such a thing as a human nature, whether or not this is a nature in which all or only some (for example, Aryan) members of our species fully share. Needless to say, this definition has nothing to do with the view that human beings are the ultimate "subjects" of the world that Heidegger identified with humanism. Ferry and Renaut rightly take Lacoue-Labarthe to task over his astonishing formulation.

But Ferry and Renault accept as their own "modest" version of humanism—in a maneuver that is also quite astonishing and equally dependent on the malleability of the concept—the famous definition that Sartre offered in "Existentialism is Humanism," the definition "which he was unfortunately to recant." In that essay, Sartre explicates his famous formula, "Existence precedes essence," by contrasting artifacts with human beings. An artifact, he writes, is produced according to a conception of the function that it will serve, and therefore "its essence—that is to say the sum of the formulae and the qualities which made its production and its definition possible—precedes its existence." Religion, Sartre continues, thinks of human beings as God's artifacts. But since, according to him, God does not exist, "There is one being whose existence comes before its essence":

> Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world—and defines himself afterwards. . . . To begin with he is nothing. . . . Man simply is . . . what he wills, and as he conceives himself after already existing. . . . Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself.

This is how Ferry and Renaut gloss Sartre's account:

> The authentic subject is "nothingness" since it escapes any attempt to capture it in a definition. This is the freedom by which he distinguishes himself from manufactured objects, which in order to exist had to be conceived, thus defined, from the start by the mind of an artisan. If, therefore, objects are "something" (definite), the true, properly human subject is *nothing* determined, is *not* identifiable; in other words, he breaks with himself since he is always beyond everything that might define him, even in his own eyes.

In their view, Sartre's humanism belongs to a "tradition going back to Rousseau." In such a tradition, "the distinguishing feature of man is his not having one, the definition of man is to be indefinable; his essence is to have no essence." According to this conception, we can deny ourselves the freedom that such humanism grants us by acting in "bad faith." This is to identify ourselves with a single one of our roles or features, to act "as though one were a creature, as though nature or history could become our codes."

That nature or history is our "code," that we are completely determined by forces exterior to us, is precisely the view that Ferry and Renaut attribute to the "thought of '68." I could argue with this attribution, at least in regard to Foucault's later work on the history of sexuality, but a general question concerning the "moderate" nature of their brand of humanism seems more urgent.

Sartre's humanism may well hark back

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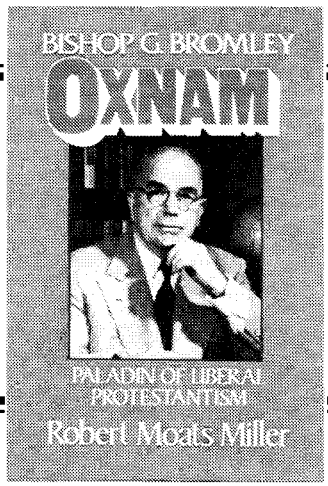
to the Enlightenment, and even to Fichte, on whose exquisitely obscure thought Ferry relies for his conception of rights in the first volume of his *Political Philosophy*, but it is anything but "moderate." Appealing to Sartre, with his absolute distinction between human beings ("beings for themselves") and everything else in the world ("beings in themselves") and to Rousseau, who in his *Discourse on Inequality* envisages that an unbridgeable gap separates us from every other living thing, seems to me to lead Ferry and Renaut right back to the "undeconstructed figures of subjectivity" to which they believe we cannot return. And why can't we? Their reason seems to be that what we are and what we can do is at least partly a function of our history, that what we are and what we can do differ according to our historical period, our social and cultural situation—the forces, in short, that partly constitute both ourselves and the world we live in.

Ferry and Renaut want to deny that we are totally subject to such forces. This, I think, is right. But Sartre believed that we are totally independent of such forces, perfectly sovereign over ourselves and our choices: this is precisely what he means when he writes that "man . . . is not definable . . . because he is at first nothing." For Sartre, we could be free agents only if we were something over and above *everything* that could be said of us, something beyond *every* situation in which we happened to be found. This, I think, is wrong.

All that is necessary in order to avoid reducing human beings to their situations, to forces over which they have no control, is to think that we are able to distance ourselves from any specific situation in which we happen to be. Our ability, our need, to occupy various roles, to belong to various groups, to accept various standards of description and evaluation, to be, in a word, complex, is sufficient to allow us to criticize and to "transcend" particular roles, groups, or standards. All that we need in order not to be defined by one role is our ability to occupy another role. What we cannot do is criticize them, and thus abandon them, all together and concurrently. We can indeed pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps—but only one boot at a time. And this view that individuals are a combination of strands as complex as the world to which each is related owes something to Nietzsche and Foucault; it is not antihumanist in any objectionable sense. It is still too early, therefore, to declare that "the French philosophy of the '60s," which criticized humanism, is dead. Some of its strands may be, others may not.

In the end, for all the admirably un-Heideggerian motive of their campaign for a theory of human rights, Ferry and Renaut are still under Heidegger's spell. They claim to pursue "an internal criticism of the world of democracy," but they actually share his contempt for the world of technology: "Who doesn't deplore chopping up movies with commercials?" they ask in an irresponsible aside—irresponsible, because the technology that broke new ground in cultural vulgarity also brought us indoor plumbing, mass inoculations, and the increased availability of information. By their own account, the world of technology is the world of modernity; and the humanism to which they appeal does not belong to that world.

It is impossible, in the end, to speak in disapproval of technology, of the world of "mass" culture, without speaking also in disapproval of democracy, as if the two were independent of one another in the modern world, as if one could be "against" technology and "for" democracy. Technology and democracy cannot be easily separated from each other. The idea that they can be separated is an error as grave as it is common, and we must guard against it. "Mass culture" may just



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be the price at which democracy comes. To find it distasteful is also to find the people whose culture it is (and whose culture isn't it?) themselves distasteful. And further reflection on "mass culture" may reveal it to be less objectionable than it seems.

It is their insistence on dissociating technology from democracy that forces Ferry and Renaut to subscribe to a conception of human beings that belongs, by their own definition, to a "premodern" world. They characterize such a conception, which they correctly attribute to Heidegger, as a "traditionalist reaction." Those are harsh words, especially since Ferry and Renaut are not above traditionalism themselves. It would be kinder and more accurate to say that though Ferry and Renaut are engaged in what they consider a revival of traditional liberalism, they are also at the same time traditional conservatives. They are respectful of the ideals of a free society, but they are suspicious of some of the means for achieving them, and they are disdainful of the people for whom they are to be secured. •

Brother Theodore

BY DANIEL AARON

Theodore Dreiser: An American Journey, 1908-1945, Volume II by Richard Lingeman

(G. P. Putnam's, 544 pp., $39.95)

Theodore Dreiser's acknowledged "greatness" isn't easy to pin down or to separate from his notorious lapses as a writer and thinker. Like Walt Whitman, another shaggy outsider, Dreiser elbowed himself into the company of Leading American Authors without the proper credentials. There are still those who think that he does not belong in the club.

Both Whitman and Dreiser possessed tremendous willpower. Both were doggedly independent. Both were denounced as barbarians. Both worked their ways in and out of journalism and went through periods of passive drifting during which they sucked up the essential nutrients for their art. Both celebrated "libidinous joys," marveled at simple things, suffered depressions and sexual torments, held radical and lawless opinions against the importunities of friend and foe. Both were autodidacts, far more cultivated than they were generally reckoned to be, and seekers alert to ideas and theories on the nature of things that would confirm what they wanted to believe. Both grew up in shabby households and turned from harsh, unsuccessful fathers to tender, nourishing mothers.

Alone among America's major writers (save Poe, who was precious to both), Whitman and Dreiser still smack of the disreputable, still come off as solitaries. For all their talk of themselves, they remain a little guarded and remote. This may be one reason why they continue to attract investigators. Dreiser's uninhibited novels find less favor among academic exegetes in search of covert designs and encrypted messages than do Whitman's multileveled poems, but he can hardly be called neglected. A rash of Dreiseriana has been published in recent years—volumes of his uncollected journalism, magazine pieces, letters, and diaries. He has also inspired numerous scholarly studies and several full-dress biographies, of which Richard Lingeman's two-volume treatment is the most recent.

Lingeman's first volume, *At the Gates of the City*, came out four years ago. More contained and pointed than its sequel, it is based in large part on the formative years that Dreiser himself wrote about in his incomparable memoirs—on the events and experiences that gave flesh and blood to his strongest novels. Lingeman records more fully than previous biographers the seasoning time of Dreiser's Indiana boyhood and adolescence, and, as Dreiser put it, his "parlous and yet delicious" adventures in big cities. The early history of the Dreiser family, in itself a gritty late Victorian soap opera, naturally dominated the volume.

Consider the following episodes in the Dreiser drama. A German-born father, moody and embittered, is hard put to pay the rent for the succession of dingy houses that the Dreisers camp in, and to curb his restless sons and wayward daughters. An all-forgiving mother strives until her death to keep the disintegrating family intact. She must cope with the unannounced arrivals and departures of her son Rome (Markus Romanus)—drunkard, sponger, vagabond, and petty crook—and the scandals touched off by the promiscuous Dreiser girls. The only successful Dreiser, the genial and generous brother Paul, a rising songwriter and vaudevillian, has already changed his name to Paul Dresser. At one critical moment he arrives with his mistress, a bordello madam and the inspiration of his still unwritten hit, "My Gal, Sal," just in time to save his hungry and homeless kin.

From the small burgs of Indiana, Theodore, a grubby parody of an Alger hero, starts his climb to fame and fortune in the Chicago of the 1880s, then on the verge of its commercial and cultural efflorescence after the great fire. Here he absorbs unconsciously, and without much moral perturbation, the underside of urban living, which had yet to make its appearance in polite fiction. Saloons and brothels and slums, traveling salesmen sporting yellow shoes, and "swell" hotel lobbies are no less natural or American to him than corn and pie. And here, after a spate of mean jobs, begins his newspaper apprenticeship under the tutelage of hard-drinking, irreverent editors. Scathingly contemptuous of Dreiser's lack of reportorial skills and his faulty syntax, they nevertheless recognize the dreamy cub's talent for writing feature stories.

Before the publication of *Sister Carrie* in 1900, Dreiser works as a reporter in St. Louis, Cleveland, Buffalo, and New York, and doesn't seem to be going anywhere. During that period, however, he has become a veteran of police courts, interviewed tycoons and political notables, edited popular magazines, written sketches and short stories, embraced the philosophy of Herbert Spencer, and turned himself into an accomplished magazinist. He has also, after a lengthy and tortuous courtship and with serious misgivings, acquired a wife.

The fate of *Sister Carrie*, which was virtually suffocated by its reluctant publisher, who found it immoral and who tried to renege on the contract negotiated during his absence, desolates the once hopeful author. For a while he appears to be on the skids, like his own down-and-out Hurstwood grooved for failure. But once again Fate intervenes (there's almost as much accident and coincidence in Dreiser's life as in his fiction), and he climbs out of the pit. By 1907, four years after he hit bottom, he is chief editor of the Butterick Company's trio of women's

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magazines, ensconced in a plush office, and masterfully directing a corps of subordinates. *Sister Carrie* is reissued the same year, this time smartly packaged and aggressively promoted by a new publisher and more widely reviewed than the first edition. Dreiser is about to discard his wife.

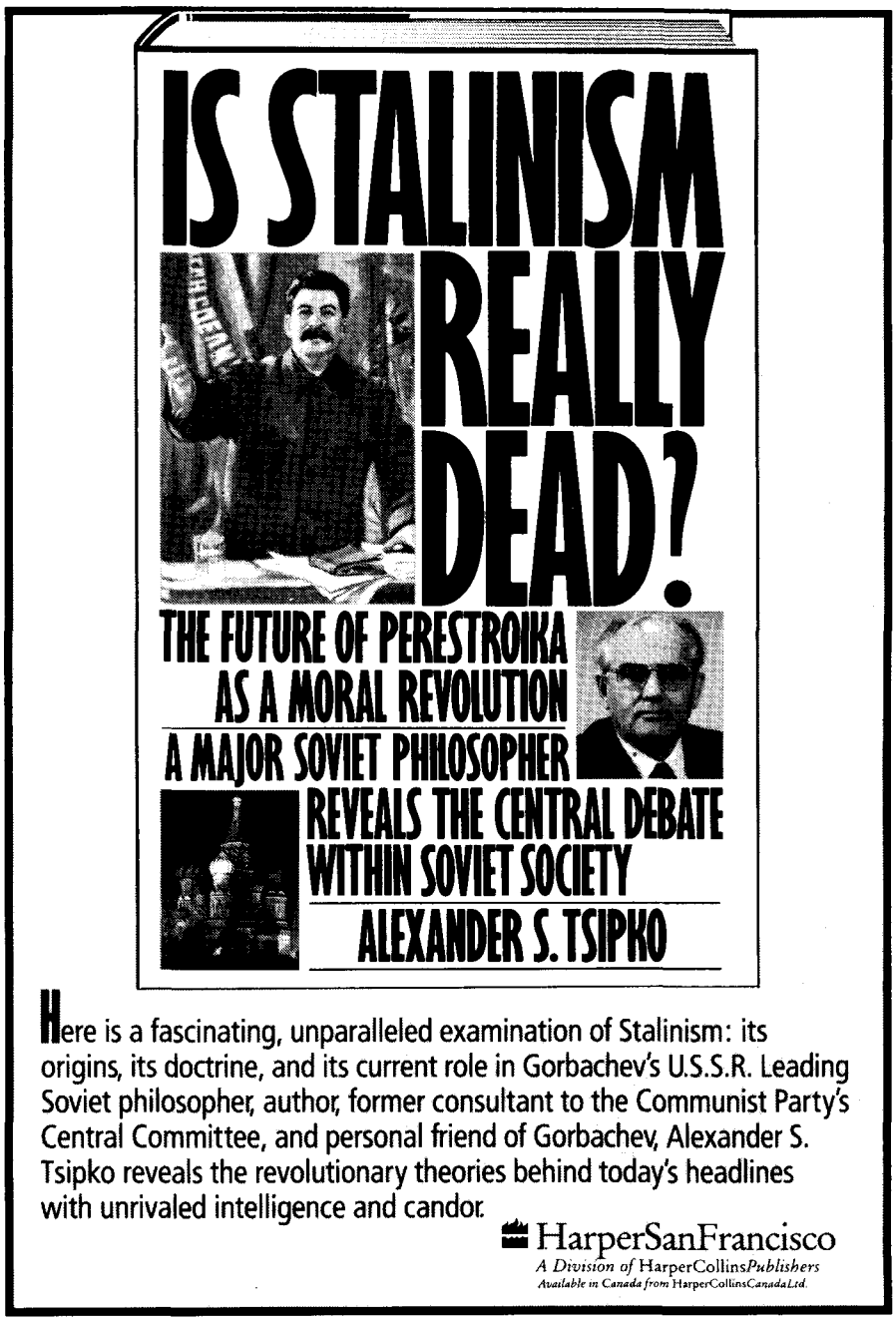
An American Journey, the second volume of Lingeman's biography, opens with the 37-year-old writer at midpoint in his career, not yet rich or famous but a survivor in a world he had come to perceive as a jungle in which the strong and cunning preyed on the weak. Now the chronicle picks up speed. Lingeman must cover so much ground, must deal with so many of Dreiser's publishing imbroglios, sexual encounters, trips and travels, political involvements, widening friendships, and metaphysical vagaries that little space remains to pause and reflect; he must hasten on to the next book, the next woman, the next squabble. Given the variety of Dreiser's affairs from 1908 until his burial in Forest Lawn, one can sympathize with the biographer's predicament. How to get in and reconcile all the details of this crowded life?

An experienced journalist and social historian, Lingeman is a trustworthy guide for the tours through Dreiser country. He has combed the University of Pennsylvania's massive Dreiser collection and digested decades of critical and biographical commentary. Nothing strikingly new emerges from his patient reworking, nor has he succeeded any better than his predecessors in locating the source of Dreiser's murky genius. Still, his accomplishment is considerable. He has written the fullest and best informed biography of Dreiser to date and put the untidy life of an unendearing man into perspective without making him any better or worse than he was.

It is not uncommon for biographers to fall out of sympathy with their subjects before they have finished writing about them. Having embarked on their research in a reverent and affectionate spirit, they grow disenchanted and incensed upon digging up unsuspected faults of mind and character in their respective heroes and heroines. Then the biographer turns prosecutor, as W. A. Swanberg did in his otherwise exemplary *Dreiser*, published twenty-five years ago. He was so intent on exposing Dreiser's sexual intrigues, duplicity, selfishness, ingratitude, and overall grossness that the author of *Sister Carrie* and *An American Tragedy* got lost in the shuffle.

Lingeman doesn't gloze over Dreiser's unappetizing blemishes anymore than he looks away from his patches of lame prose, but his eye is fixed unfalteringly on Dreiser's books, on their genesis, exfoliation, and reception. Swanberg arbitrarily chose to focus on the extraliterary Dreiser "living a life of constant struggle often far removed from literature" at the expense of Dreiser the writer. He gained something from this decision: his book is neater and more concentrated than Lingeman's. Yet the latter's reattachment of the two Dreisers broadens and deepens the reader's understanding of both. For Dreiser is pre-eminently the autobiographical writer feeding upon himself, living his novels almost as he was writing them. The young Theodore, ashamed of his looks, his clothes, his poverty, daydreaming of money and beautiful women, and, as he says of himself, "blazing with sex and a desire for superiority," is diffused in them. And so is the older Dreiser, seducer, philosopher, poet, rebel. His books are a composite of his fears, his desires, and his resentments.

Lingeman's interanimating Dreisers illuminate his biography until he winds up his discussion of *An American Tragedy*, published in 1925. That year marked the apogee of Dreiser's literary fortunes and the beginning of his artistic and physical decline. Thereafter Lingeman's formula works less well. The last 200 pages cover the twenty years during which the noisy pontificator drowned out the artist. The cistern of memory he had depended on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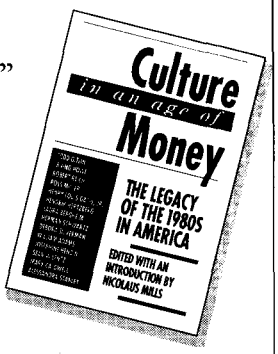

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for so long was all but dried up. *The Bulwark* and *The Stoic* don't count for much. His underestimated *A Gallery of Women* (fictionalized in-depth portraits of fifteen women he had known or encountered during the first twenty years of the century) had been practically finished six years before its publication in 1929. Never again would he tell with such assurance and sensitivity the stories of frustrated ambitious women in search of intellectual, artistic, and sexual fulfillment.

Embroiled in the contentious debates of the 1930s and 1940s, Dreiser railed against Big Capitalism, the Roman Catholic Church, the British fox-hunting gentry, and, more guardedly, upstart Jews much too clever for their own or the nation's good. Slapdash tracts like *Dreiser Looks at Russia* (1928), *Tragic America* (1931), and *America Is Worth Saving* (1941) were illogical, inaccurate, and slovenly written, and breathed a mean-spirited nativism. His engagement in "causes"—the defense of the coal miners in Harlan County, Kentucky, or the case of the Scottsboro Boys in Alabama—was genuine and unequivocal, but at bottom his radicalism was unsystematic, impulsive, and inconsistent. For Dreiser, Lingeman observes, communism was "a dream of justice and equity rather than an ideological creed." Joining the Party at the very end of his life was tantamount to entering a secular church.

In fact, Dreiser's response to causes and programs, and to ideas and people, for that matter, had rarely been disinterested. ("I, personally" was one of his irritating and revealing locutions.) He really had only one subject: himself. In the words of one of his close woman friends, "Dreiser *was* his own emotions, his own instincts, or intuitions, attempting to communicate them directly, often in terms contradictory to each other." The truth of this observation is evident in every phase and period of Dreiser's life. It especially applies to his relations with women, which figure prominently in Lingeman's biography.

"All normal men crave women—and particularly beautiful women," he once declared in his no-nonsense way, and for a good part of his life he was on the prowl. Both Dreiser wives soon learned that he had no respect for the marriage bond, that he was neither loyal nor honest in his dealings with them. His rationale for what he called "varietism" is spelled out in *The Genius* (1915), the most autobiographical of his novels. Its burden is essentially that art and monogamy curdle when mixed. Art is sublimated sex, beautiful women are catalysts for creativeness. Indeed, according to Lingeman, "that was the reason for the eternal quest for Aphrodite—to find a fresh feminine beauty to replace the fading charms of the present love-object."

There is more comedy than pathos in Lingeman's account of the love-struck Dreiser's pursuit of the eighteen-year-old Thelma Cudlippe, daughter of a Butterick Company employee, for whom he was prepared to chuck wife and job in 1908. "You said once," he wrote to her, "you would be mother & sister and sweetheart to me. I am a little pleading boy now in need of your love, your mother love." Bewildered and scared by his infatuation, "Honeypot" ("Little Blue Bird," "Flower Face," "Divine Fire" were some of the other pet names he lavished on her) felt only relief when her anxious mother snatched her away from her intimidating lover. Subsequent appeals to other young women were more rewarding, and he was seldom short of motherly sisterly sweethearts. The kind he eventually came to prefer had style, humor, boldness, imagination, and intelligence along with beauty. They could also type and edit his manuscripts. A practical man, he put his Aphrodites to work.

Notwithstanding the nonstop fornications that Dreiser graphically tabulated in his diaries ("long rounds," "heavy unions," "fierce screws"), Lingeman believes that he didn't treat his women solely as objects. He notes Dreiser's "intense sincerity and *interest*" in everything about them—their clothes, talk, affectations, and ambitions. This "interest" was carnal and clinical—John Cowper Powys likened him to "a botanist examining a plant at his leisure"—but it was also artistic and intellectual. Dreiser respected their minds and within limits trusted their judgments of his work. They, in turn, found him immensely attractive, not so much because of his alleged "animal magnetism" but because he listened to them attentively, comforted and encouraged them; and it says something about him that none of his discarded loves indulged in bitter recriminations. They simply accepted him for what he was.

The ultimate mystery, of course, is how Dreiser converted the rank compost of his inner and outer history into literature. What is it about his best books that accounts for their distinction? Lingeman doesn't directly address himself to such a question. Perhaps he agrees with Ellen Moers that "a straight biography" isn't the right way "to get at the slippery greatness of Theodore Dreiser." Still, his long look at the man and writer will aid anyone seeking to grasp it.

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Dreiser wasn't an original thinker or a profound social analyst, and he certainly wasn't the first writer to dramatize the "tragedy of desire," the bleak indifference of nature, or the nightmare of the American dream. He was a deep feeler, however, and he was embedded as no other writer before him in the amorphous and heterogeneous American commonality. He was of it as his alter egos Carrie Meeber, George Hurstwood, Eugene Witla, and Clyde Griffiths were of it.

His friend, adviser, and (in the early years) pugnacious champion Mencken worried about this ingrained affiliation. It explained, he thought, Dreiser's susceptibility to "causes and remedies," and his adherence to those middle- and lower-class tastes that Mencken entertainingly savaged. He tried hard to rescue Dreiser the immoralist and Puritan-basher, the novelist of "universal and inexplicable tragedy," from Dreiser the credulous dupe of cranks, the mystic with the ear cocked for messages from the spirit world. At last he gave up on his friend, not so much because he had come to despise Dreiser's social and political opinions and messy personal life as because of what he believed to be Dreiser's failure as a writer. What was one to say of a novelist, he exclaimed in his review of *An American Tragedy*, "who, after a quarter of a century at his trade, still writes . . . such dreadful bilge?"

Dreiser, to borrow Thomas Wolfe's distinction, was a putter-inner rather than a taker-outer. The job of cleaning up after him, of cutting and pruning his swollen manuscripts, straightening out grammatical tangles, and correcting misspelled words, was left to friends, editors, wives, and mistresses. He welcomed their tinkerings and he increasingly depended on them, but neither the complaints nor the compliments of critics appeared to affect his literary practices.

He was the last major American author to write for, and directly to, the public at large without embarrassment or condescension. He had no special audience in mind, certainly no saving remnant or happy few. The very thought of a mongrel America full of happy, vulgar, slack, eager, aspiring people pleased him. In his Nietzschean moods, he might refer to them as sheep and numbskulls and shock them by depicting their forbidden daydreams in his novels, but no more than Mark Twain could Dreiser disassociate himself from them. It was they to whom he felt spiritually akin. He took their problems seriously, tolerated their gaucheries, respected their aspiration, however banal and trivial. They constituted

continued on page 40

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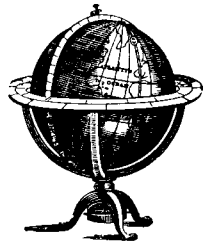

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My Neighbor, the Distinguished Count

At first thinking it was harmless
Enough, I told myself I had pints
To spare, so why refuse a simple favor?
Hannah could have turned him away at the door,
But I didn't think that was necessary.
I'd always liked his mother and father
(Whom he grew sadly to resemble less
As months passed, his condition progressing.)
The visits came bearably seldom,
And no one could have brought everything
Off more smoothly. Afterwards I'd feel calmer,
Drowsy, reconciled. Easy to see why
People once regularly bled themselves
For medical reasons, though of course
That was a cure normally reserved for men,
Who labor under greater pressures than we.
Easy, too, for one to think of donor service
As the good deed for the day—thy neighbor
As thyself, no?—a neighbor so visibly
In need, his pale brow furrowed, an electric
Tic active at the corner of the mouth.
Thoughts less reassuring surfaced later
When what he meant as compensation arrived,
The flowers, touring car idling outside,
Heart-shaped boxes of intricate chocolates,
Young Burgundies, spring lamb nicely done up.

*

Why did the visits multiply? No doubt
There had been other clients beforehand,
But perhaps they moved or died, who can say?
Or else he'd concluded I was, for the moment,
A likely vintage and a pleasant temperature.
One afternoon I brought myself to ask.
"I come to you, dearest, because you think
Of me. An irresistible summons."
Manners: how tell an acquaintance serene
In the conviction of having been your constant
Preoccupation for how long now that,
In fact, you hardly ever thought of him?
Chided jokingly, could he read minds?
He answered, even better than that, he could read
Signs. It seemed I'd left them everywhere.
And true messages always reached their addressee,
Wasn't it so? From this I knew the mere facts
Of our erratic situation counted for nothing
When placed beside his own inner persuasions.

*

He told me he'd been seeing more "signs" than ever,
And certainly he came to me more and more often,
Insisting I call him Tony, as his friends did.
I tactfully refused. When dealing with
Obsession, as a rule the safest plan
Is to maintain a strict formality.
Yet it occurred to me at some point symptoms
Might creep up with no warning. You would be
Quite unaware of new expressive habits
Connected, he said, to your daydreams—which,
In this case, were also traps. I must outwit them.
Have you ever tried *not* to think of a face
Or a voice, going over each confused tangle
On the mental loom to make sure the banned
Thread of reference doesn't appear in it?
How often I longed to stay profoundly asleep
And never be conscious again. . . . Waking,
I brooded on little but how to stop our meetings,
A rebellion no doubt proving just how much his
I was. For what demonstrates more clearly
The power of a creator than fierce resistance
From his creature? If alive, it will be free.
Free, it will insist on its own ideas—
And so, at last, have to be disciplined.

*

Lately, there's been another turn of the screw.
His chauffeur arrives with a silver cover
Under which lies a rat, spitted and roasted.
Or his gardener will leave a fistful of poison ivy
Tied with catgut in the mailbox. And then, the dresses,
Too small, too large, jaundice yellow, black violet.
Now, it's hopeless, no hour passes without thoughts
I've given up trying to sidestep or quench—
Which he has taken as license to appear
At all hours, day or night, and send, with thanks,
More frequent tokens of declining esteem.
I gather from what he says (we sit, we chat)
I'm not what I used to be, his visits, indeed,
A gesture of sentimental gallantry.
Apparently there's someone else less . . . shopworn.
Yesterday I asked, in a voice admittedly weak
(The constant drain) *why* he still bothered to call.
"Because, my dear, you haven't stopped thinking of me."
I blushed (faintly), he smiled, and when he left there was—
Where? Oh yes, the kitchen—a coiled blood sausage,
Old, wizened, utterly dried out, resting
On a small hand mirror. I remember this now
Only because I can't help doing so, aware
Of the acrid little joke: that, according
To his iron code of gamesmanship, I have
Just authorized another courtesy call.
In full knowledge also (hideous necklace of sores
That no longer heal, veins like blackened vines!)
That today he will come for the last time.
My quaint request is that the coup de grâce
Be administered by himself alone and not
By any of his troop of haggard followers
Who have begun to congregate outside.
Thick as autumn leaves ready for the bonfire,
They throng my doorstep, basset eyes pleading;
And, without giving their names, pronounce my own,
A silken cajolery drolly intoned, as if—
As if they were old friends I'm about to rejoin.
And then, this driving pain in my eyeteeth,
This thirst. . . . Well, you see, I want my turn, too.
A country mile off, I saw and felt the change.
It has the magnetism of all dimly grasped ideals.
Surely by now no one can say I am not deserving?
I understand the problems and am willing to work.

*

Look, he has arrived. Hannah's white cap vanishes
Down the dark passage and is replaced by his face
Floating in the gloom like a full moon, eyes lowered,
His left hand dangling a gold watch on its long chain.
Never have I seen so much, nor ever felt so deeply—
Hence the sudden piercing intimation of what I am
One day to be, this twilit picture of discretion, the set
Of his features calm as an engraving of one who lets words
Of gratitude pass in silence as he settles to the task.

Alfred Corn

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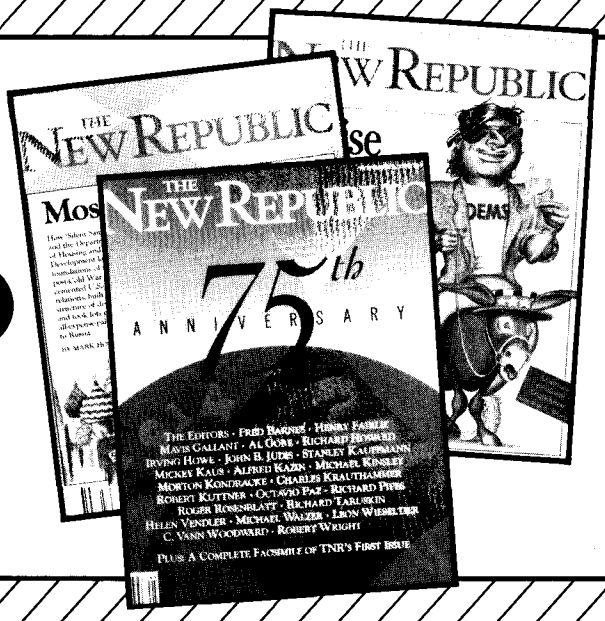

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his subject, what he described as the "tribes and shoals of the incomplete, the botched, the semi-articulate," and in them he recognized himself writ large. Dreiser wanted to write authentic and truthful books. To that end, he brought the full weight of the life that Lingeman has painstakingly constructed and interpreted.

DANIEL AARON is professor of English emeritus at Harvard University.

The Liberation of Print

BY GORDON S. WOOD

The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America by Michael Warner

(Harvard University Press, 205 pp., $25)

Historians ought to be very happy these days. Everywhere we look, historical thinking (of a sort, at least) is exerting "hegemonic power" over a wide variety of academic fields. What is called "historicism" is now infecting everything from scientific thinking and law to philosophy and women's studies. We are being told to abandon all universal values and standards and to recognize that everything is relative—or that everything is, in other words, a product of specific historical circumstances. Scholars in a number of disciplines are urging us to understand the peculiar historicity of every person, event, value, or ideal, to acknowledge once and for all that there are no truths outside of that historicity.

So blatant, so prevalent have these calls for a "new historicism" become that even historians have become aware of them—historians being usually the last to know about avant-garde theories, which is, of course, their saving grace. No group of scholars is wielding this "new historicism" with more confidence and excitement than postmodern literary critics. To these avant-garde literary scholars, "historicism" seems to have become the latest theoretical weapon in their continual battle to destroy what they commonly refer to as the hegemonic forms of the existing culture.

Michael Warner's book is a good example of this new literary historicism, though he never explicitly invokes the term. His subject is the transformation of printing and reading that took place in eighteenth-century America. Warner, an associate professor of English at Rutgers University, is especially eager to contest, and to subject to historicist criticism, the work of scholars such as Elizabeth Eisenstein and Walter Ong, who have written about the importance of printing in a McLuhanite manner in which the medium becomes the message. These scholars assume printing to be an unhistorical constant; they take the historically developed characteristics of printing as inherent to the technology and project them backward in time, believing that the technology of printing has "a logic internal to itself, a logic which then exerts causative force in human affairs," and which encourages, all by itself, "rationalization and democratization." This, says Warner with undisguised contempt, is a "kind of technological determinism."

The McLuhanite scholars are not historical enough for Warner, but even Jürgen Habermas, whose book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) forms Warner's starting point, is insufficiently historical. Habermas argued that the invention of printing led, by the late seventeenth century, to a fundamental change in the political life of the West. It created a new bourgeois public sphere in which political discourse was separated both from the state and from private life (including the economy), and thus became capable of regulating and criticizing both. Warner aims to extend this argument to eighteenth-century America, but to refine and further to historicize it.

Habermas, says Warner, saw printing simply as creating new opportunities for individuals to make public use of their reason; he simply assumed as a constant a modern consciousness that developed, he should have realized, only historically. In his book Warner wants "to analyze the historical transformation in print discourse as fully historical—to analyze it without attributing its significance to a historical point of reference, such as the intrinsic nature of individuals, reason, or technology." Such an analysis, Warner realizes, will treat "the textuality of printed works . . . as a feature of specific historical contexts rather than as what makes them 'literature.' " Consequently, he says, in his book the works of the period will "remain alien to us in fundamental ways."

Although this distancing of literary works from the present may bother literary scholars, it is something that historians will applaud. Historians have long winced at the crude ways that literary scholars and others have wrenched past writings out of their historical contexts for aesthetic and other present-minded purposes. Warner's approach, therefore, resembles what historians have always celebrated as the central thrust of all historical reconstruction—the attempt to shed our present-mindedness in order to recapture the integrity of the past in all its different and alien pastness.

Despite this resemblance, however, few historians or ordinary readers will be able to make much sense of Warner's book. This is not because, as Warner thinks, the book avoids the kinds of simple one-way causal explanation that historians and others expect (e.g., "printing caused the growth of democracy"). It is because the book is cast in the postmodern, post-Marxist, deconstructionist theories and terms currently fashionable among literary scholars. The book is full of the special language that literary critics now use to separate themselves from the power structure as well as the common herd of us ordinary readers—"interpellation," "exfoliation," "ambiguation," "valorized," "intellection," "narrativized," and "meta" this and "meta" that. Everything is "mediated" (the literary substitute for "caused") and "overdetermined," "redetermined," and "retrodetermined," and of course "discourse" becomes the ubiquitous term describing every oral and written exchange of opinion.

Warner invents principles—"the principle of supervision," "the principle of negativity"—that confuse rather than clarify his argument. And he writes sentences that defy understanding for all but the initiated: "This personal tactic of depersonalization both requires and enables a specialized subsystem of public discourse"; "The very idea of the diffusion of literature presupposes a recalcitrant social difference. Its implicit center-periphery metaphorics registers the centralization of literacy that the thematic content of the discourse disavows"; "It must be emphasized also that the mutual recognition promised in print discourse was not an interaction between particularized persons, but among persons constituted by the negating abstrac-

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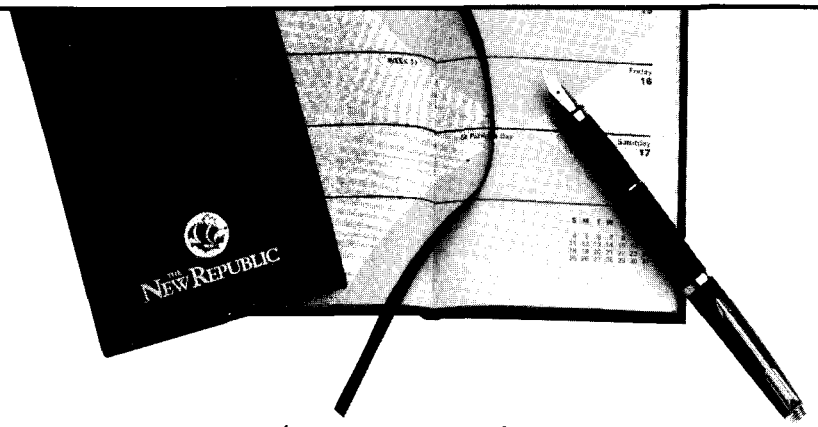
tion of themselves"; "Public discourse and the market were mutually clarifying, then, in both their positive and negative characters: positive, because both public and market were metonymically realized in printed, mass-produced artifacts; negative, because the private subject finds his relation to both the public and the market only by negating the given reality of himself, thereby considering himself the abstract subject of the universal (political or economic) discourse." So it goes: sentence after sentence of this sort of "ambiguation," written in this "specialized discursive subsystem."

This is lamentable because such esoteric language will severely cut down the number of readers of the book, and Warner, beneath his opaque lit-crit post-Marxist jargon, has some very interesting things to say. It is ironic, to say the least, that scholars eager to deconstruct "texts" in order to expose the ways they wield power in our society should themselves create texts that mask and obscure much of what they want to say. And that bright younger scholars like Warner should be induced by the fashions of their discipline into using this jargon is an especially poignant form of "hegemonic coercion."

Warner and other literary critics believe, no doubt, that to look at the world in new ways requires new words and new conceptions. But in the case of Warner's book at least, this is not true. Most of his "new historicist" ideas about the socially constructed nature of reality and the textuality of print are the stock-in-trade assumptions of good historians, and demand only a good historical imagination to be made effective. All the intricacy and the subtlety of his argument, all his many insights into the nature of literature and public life in eighteenth-century America, are not dependent on post-Marxist and "deconstruction" theories and the new post-modern jargon; they easily and more clearly could have been expressed in ordinary language.

Warner is centrally concerned with the relationship between the development of printing and the rise of the republican ideology that accompanied the American Revolution. Of course historians a generation ago, most notably Arthur Schlesinger Sr., long tried to find some causal connection between the growth of newsprint in the eighteenth century and the coming of the Revolution. But Warner is not interested in crude explanations of historical causality; he is interested, rather, in the reciprocal relationship between printing and eighteenth-century culture and in the ways each interacted upon and changed the other, in particular in the



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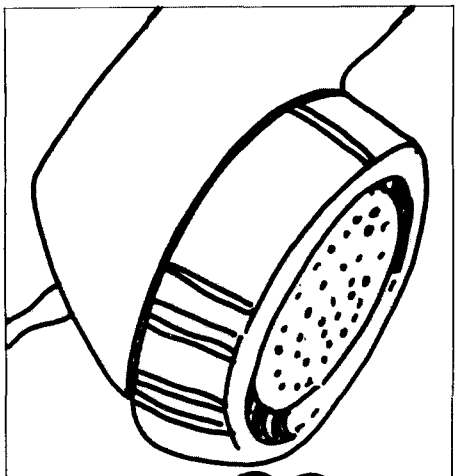

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ways the culture "refashioned the textuality of print." Beneath Warner's heavy theory and clumsy jargon is an important argument trying to get out.

Warner contends that the emergence of print and publication as we know it reconceptualized "the public sphere," articulated "a new representation of the political order," and "restructured relations of power." A traditional premodern society had no clear understanding of our separation between public and private or state and society. Governmental office was generally regarded as a burden to be shouldered by those who had wealth, talent, and social pre-eminence. The political leaders were the social leaders, and the authority to govern flowed from the social position and the personal power of these men. Hence such officials were understandably sensitive to public criticism of their private character, and were quick to invoke the common law of seditious libel to protect the personal reputations that underlay their capacity to govern.

Modernity changed all this. It separated the public world from the private world, and state from society; and it made the criterion for holding governmental office something other than personal or social power. As Warner argues, these changes were very much involved in what happened to print and publication. The traditional society had no conception of a press that ought to be "free" to criticize the government; consequently, the print that existed rarely defied or criticized governmental authority.

As the society became larger and more impersonal, however, writers lost immediate touch with their readers and found themselves writing for a more anonymous public. The result was the creation of a public sphere of publication in which the participants were unknown and unknowable. This public sphere of print, Warner argues, formed the real basis for the rise of republican government. The spoken word of traditional society had been too closely tied to men's personal authority to allow for criticism and defiance, but the growth of print created "the abstraction of the public" and allowed for debate and controversy without endangering the unity of society. People came to realize that they could, in their publications, argue and differ over means while still wishing the good of their country. In other words, print made it possible for Americans to imagine themselves as a republican people who could act "in distinction from the state."

This argument is set forth in the first two chapters of the book. The remaining four chapters, though they deal in general with literature and eighteenth-century republican culture, are essentially separate essays on particular themes. The third chapter focuses on Benjamin Franklin as "the first American to fashion a career entirely of letters." This is Warner's weakest chapter, and the only one that does violence to his historicist aim. It is based on a questionable, indeed, anachronistic reading of Franklin, who scarcely thought of his writing as "a career."

In his fourth chapter Warner delves into the interesting problem of the "textuality and legitimacy" of written or printed constitutions in the revolutionary era, but his theoretical apparatus of "textuality" and "signification" unnecessarily complicates his investigation. He does, however, appreciate some of the widespread popular mistrust of discretionary authority that lay behind all the codification movements of the period. Many revolutionaries actually thought that written texts, getting things down in black and white, would eliminate judicial and magisterial interpretation and restrict the power of "official hermeneutics": they needed some postmodern literary critics to tell them how naive they were in believing that texts could be determinate and stable.

In perhaps the best chapter in his book, Warner argues convincingly that modern literary scholars have misunderstood the literature of late eighteenth-century America. Critics have been disappointed with the writings of the 1780s and 1790s because they have judged them in accord with modern and hence anachronistic "literary" expectations that the eighteenth century had no intention of realizing. Eighteenth-century Americans defined literature broadly and nearly equated it with knowledge itself. Thus, in simply expanding the number of readers and in diffusing knowledge through print, they could believe they were successfully achieving their literary goals—even if subsequent generations of romantic and modern critics thought otherwise. A final chapter attempts to clinch this point through a detailed reading of one of Charles Brockden Brown's "novels," *Arthur Mervyn*, which of course was not meant to be a novel at all in any modern sense. Thus Warner is "struck by the final incommensurability between our own standards of appreciation and those of Brown's republican literature."

If this is the sort of judgment that the new literary historicism will lead to, historians can only wish it well. But much of the new historicism will not be satisfied with merely demonstrating the different-

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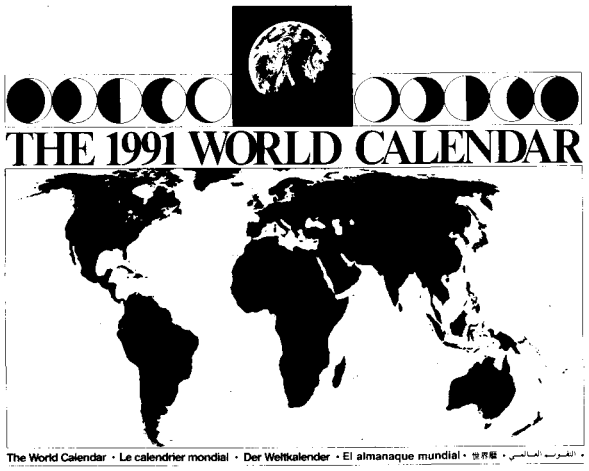

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ness and the remoteness of the past, as Warner's book seems to. Ultimately much of the new literary scholarship has radical Foucault-like agendas and New Left goals that are antithetical to real historical understanding. (Indeed, at one point Warner says that "the argument of my book presupposes the arguments" of the post-Marxist work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 1985, by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.) The new historicism wants to deconstruct the past in order to show us that all the values, all the institutions, all the canons, all the truths, and all the texts by which we live our lives are simply imprisoning fictions that were created by some people in the past (usually white males) for self-serving purposes. These fictions are, therefore, readily susceptible to being destroyed by us in the present, in preparation for the emergence of a new, more just, more democratic order.

Such a Rousseauian view, which assumes that knowledge of the fictional character of custom will itself free us, severely underestimates the power of the past and the power of culture. All the beliefs, values, and institutions of the culture may indeed be artificial fictions; but the historical fact of the matter is that they are fictions created by a process so complicated, involving so many participants with so many conflicting purposes over such long periods of time, that no amount of deconstruction, no degree of unmasking, can ever undo them. The culture, of course, can be, indeed, it will be, changed—but in ways that no one, including the radical post-Marxists and the deconstructionist literary critics, ever intended or wanted. Understanding this fact about the process of change is true historicism.

GORDON S. WOOD, University Professor and Professor of American History at Brown University, is currently a Sunderland Fellow at the University of Michigan Law School.

The Mind-Body Solution

BY JEROME GROOPMAN

Wrestling with the Angel: A Memoir of Triumph over Illness by Max Lerner

(W. W. Norton, 210 pp., $18.95)

We have been inundated with books on medical illness over the past few years. The unconventional ones among them assert that the power of the mind, exercised through positive thinking, can suppress microbes or mutations that otherwise lead to fatal infection, immune deficiency, or cancer; techniques of visualization are very much in vogue, in which the patient mentally pictures his immune system or cancer cells reverting to a normal state and, abracadabra, imagination becomes reality. Balancing such works is a spate of musings written by scientists or science journalists celebrating the power of genetic engineering and high-technology therapies. Many of these books are at best tiresome and at worst self-serving. There's usually a heavy dose of marketing permeating the work of both faith healers (who push "alternative therapies") and science cheerleaders.

Based on his struggle with a series of malignant and cardiac illnesses, Max Lerner delivers a highly personal and refreshing story to both the lay and the expert reader. Pulled by the two forces of orthodox and counterculture treatment—they are embodied, for Lerner, in his sons, one a young cancer specialist at Harvard and the other involved in an alternative institute on the West Coast—he finds himself in the complex position of commuting physically and emotionally between worlds. He is no fool, and approaches both the straight medical world and the anti-establishment alternative with a tough skepticism, the product of his experience in the streets and the classroom. His senses far from dulled by his illnesses, he has no trouble discerning nonsense and charlatanism, medical smoke and mirrors.

Lerner carries the reader along his journey in a highly personal fashion. He gossips about his family and friends, about the appealing and not-so-appealing qualities of medical personnel, and he vividly describes the ordeal of chemotherapy, and the atmosphere of hospital ICUs and outpatient clinics. He swings wildly between what he realizes is unfounded optimism and overwhelming despair. Lerner ponders the use of visualization and the belief that thought and will can overcome disease: "This discussion of the boundaries between reality and imagination was playacting, yes, but it was willed playacting, a suspension of disbelief for high stakes. Playing the field marshal of these troops gave me the one thing I needed more than any other—the enacting of the drama of hope."

The book is attended by the muses that have been Lerner's companions during his long and distinguished career. Emerson, Pascal, King David, Blake, Wittgenstein, Bergson all appear. Some of these invocations seem to be strained, but Lerner eventually convinces the reader that the wisdom retrieved from this broad humanistic background was focused by him for therapeutic purposes. To recover from the shock and the despair of his diagnosis, he needed to locate these spiritual supports: "When I touched bottom, I had to burrow inside, to turn my being around toward healing."

Many of the swings of emotion that Lerner describes, and his persistent theme of the sense of loss of control, ring all too true for anybody who has been a patient facing a painful, complex medical situation with no guarantee of resolution. For the experienced, this book will seem accurate; for the (blessedly) inexperienced, it will serve as a primer. And physicians will have much to learn from Lerner about the pivotal role not only of the doctor's technical expertise, but of his persona. "The greatest threat anyone with a radical illness runs is the threat to the continuity of selfhood," Lerner writes:

> If that gets shattered there is nothing to fight back with. The doctors, nurses and orderlies, testers and counters, report writers, sometimes even friends and family, see the patient as someone being acted on: "Patch him up and get him out." The patient alone can fight that perception by an active perception of self.

This chronicle shows how the doctor's gestures, mannerisms, grimaces, use of syntax are magnified by the patient and have a direct and lasting impact on his spirit. Lerner rightly criticizes physicians for being too focused on technique, too busy to take the time to interact with the patient as an individual. Doctors are often ignorant of the dimensions they assume in the eyes of a patient, ignorant of the subliminal messages transmitted in the language of words and body. *Wrestling with the Angel* goes to the heart of the patient's needs and sets standards for the knowledge and the behavior of the physician.

Lerner's ultimate triumph, his success

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in regaining control of his life, is born of his power to choose between the orthodox and the heretical. Like the aging and failing Isaac, a visceral preference for the primitive Esau is subordinated as he bestows his blessing on the cerebral Jacob. It is Jacob who wrestles and subdues the angel, a struggle through the night of illness that gives way to a new and marvelously examined life.

JEROME GROOPMAN is a physician and researcher who directs the AIDS and cancer programs at Deaconess Hospital/Harvard Medical School.

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

they are Republican supporters of Silber's opponent, the patrician conservative William Weld. Moreover, after Blumenthal's article appeared in TNR, his source for a putative "Silber shocker" made an embarrassed rush to the pages of the *Globe* (October 10) to say, "Silber attributed that line to others, and I made that clear to Sydney [sic]. This was never meant for publication, and I don't believe that it should have been published in THE NEW REPUBLIC or anyplace else."

Blumenthal claims that at the Democratic convention in June, "Silber mustered no organization of his own" and was in thrall to "primeval powers" such as Senate President Bulger. As a Silber delegate to that convention, I can attest to the presence of his organization. Moreover, Senator Bulger would not know me if he fell over me.

None of this is to deny that Silber can be irascible and contentious. But it is his politics, not his outspokenness, that has attracted the voters. What Blumenthal calls Silber's "spontaneous ejaculations" were the key to breaking the taboo on crucial issues. The structure of welfare programs, the "rationing" of medical care, the role of the media in the campaigns, and the failures of public education were "too controversial" until Silber raised them. Blumenthal should have been the first to recognize that in the habitual conflict of trivial campaigns and superficial media coverage, a shock is what it took to get these issues discussed.

Blumenthal operates on the assumption that Massachusetts voters were a bunch of slobs whose current but transient discontents Silber has captured. But were independent voters simply angry, they had two Republicans to choose from. Instead Silber, and not Weld as Blumenthal asserts, won them overwhelmingly.

Whether it is BU's investment in Seragen, a biotech research company, or Silber's insistence on transferring resources from the terminally ill to the young, or his emphasis, as in BU's program in the Chelsea school system, on investing in early childhood programs and prenatal care, Silber stands for investing in the future and postponing immediate gratification. This stand has incurred the wrath of many interest groups.

Silber is an FDR and JFK liberal, not a McGovern or Teddy Kennedy liberal. His prescription for economic recovery in Massachusetts includes a large dose of pump priming. He has a strong civil rights record including support for busing. He supports real affirmative action, such as BU's Minority Entrepreneurs Program, while opposing quotas. And yes, he is pro-choice. While he is not entitled to an endorsement from TNR, although his politics are similar to TNR favorites like Senators Nunn, Bradley, and Gore, he is certainly entitled to a fair shake.

SAMUEL LEIKEN
Chelsea, Massachusetts

Sidney Blumenthal replies:
I stand by all the details of my piece, with the exception of one correction: Silber used campaign, not university, funds to purchase copies of his book.

Whether John Silber's "shockers" have helped raise the level of debate (calling all residents of a black neighborhood in Boston "drug addicts," for example) is a matter of some dispute. Nonetheless, there seems little question that these "shockers" have been impulsive remarks, not a conscious strategy, a point his press secretary readily admitted in a recent speech at the Kennedy School.

Samuel Leiken appears to have been an unusually idealistic Silber delegate to the state Democratic convention; unlike most of the others, he was not doing the bidding of the deeply entrenched Statehouse political forces who had ensured that Silber won just over the 15 percent threshold required to be placed on the primary ballot. More than a decade ago I wrote a column on Massachusetts state politics, and many of the powers then are arrayed behind Silber now, among them Senate President Billy Bulger; his deputy, Senator Biff McLain; and former Senate President Kevin Harrington, now an influential lobbyist on behalf of those who can afford his fee. Leiken, who, since the convention, has been a Silber campaign worker, might learn more about the Silber agenda by making their acquaintance.

To the editors:
We did not sue John Silber for violating our copyright, as Martin Peretz errone-ously states in his October 15 Diarist. We asked Silber to pull an advertisement that reproduced one of our headlines out of context in a distorted manner. The fact that the headline originally ran over a tough and critical piece about Francis X. Bellotti's record as Massachusetts attorney general certainly wouldn't back up Peretz's wrongheaded claim that we were unrelentingly hostile to Silber.

We have aggressively covered one of the most significant elections in recent Massachusetts history. That is not being unrelentingly hostile to Silber or anyone else. It is simply doing our job.

BENJAMIN B. TAYLOR
Boston, Massachusetts

The writer is executive editor of *The Boston Globe*.

Martin Peretz replies:
OK, Benjamin Taylor is correct. The *Globe* didn't sue Silber for violating its copyright; it threatened to sue Silber. As to the way the *Globe* covered Silber's campaign, Taylor is being very coy indeed. During the primary campaign one would meet many *Globe* staffers who were mortified by the unrelenting hostility of the news pages to Silber. This hostility led some staff reporters to be confident of his defeat. In any case, the blatant rancor of the *Globe* has, in fact, by now been discussed in the *Globe*'s own pages.

Headache

To the editors:
Knowing that it's the editors who write the headlines for articles, I can't blame Ronald Radosh for the headline "Socialist Heroes" over his article about the Rosenbergs (October 22). An accurate headline would have been "Communist Heroes." We socialists had nothing whatever to do with the Rosenbergs and their activities, and besides, we have enough troubles without having *that* put on our backs.

IRVING HOWE
New York, New York

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NORTHAMPTON DIARIST

Chain gang

GOT THE MEDIA CHAIN LETTER in the mail the other day. Yes, I know: you Washington media big shots were circulating it fast and furiously last summer, and in New York it was making the rounds even earlier than that. But it takes a while for such things as fashion trends, budget spin, and chain letters to percolate up here to the boonies. Actually, I hadn't even known there was a media chain letter, and was more than a little surprised to discover its existence. I would naturally have assumed that the worldly, hard-bitten sophisticates in the national media would look down their noses at something as overtly superstitious as a chain letter. But the evidence to the contrary is incontrovertible. And such evidence it is, too. "Anyone who can play any kind of who-do-you-know game about publishing will find the signatures utterly orgasmic," writes one recipient. Er, not exactly. It's more a kind of media status game, filled with unseemly overtones of "see-how-famous-my-friends-are." Thus Ben Bradlee received it from the considerably less famous Shelby Coffey (editor of the *LA Times*, in case you were wondering), hasbeen columnist Smith Bagley sent it to *Wall Street Journal* Washington bureau chief Al Hunt, who in turn sent it to Democratic pollster (and valued source, no doubt) Peter Hart, who in turn sent it to Tip O'Neill, who is so famous that even non-media groupies have heard of him. Alas, I couldn't see who O'Neill sent it on to; the copier blacked it out. Sorry.

WHAT I PARTICULARLY RELISH about the media chain letter is how sheepish everyone seems about passing it along—how they try to put a sheen of that fabled media cynicism on the very superstition they are succumbing to. "I'm counting on you to break this ridiculous chain," writes Houghton Mifflin chief John Sterling. "A man will do anything out of fear," adds the legendarily fearless Bradlee. "You'd think I would have more courage than to send it on to you," laments Arthur "Pinch" Sulzburger. But he doesn't. "So sue me! I'm a coward," writes someone else. And finally, a TNR editor who shall remain nameless passes it on to the next batch of recipients with this note: "Chain of fools—but the gods can be fussy." Chain of fools, indeed. If Reed Irvine got his hands on this thing, he'd have enough ammo to last him for years.

ON THE OTHER HAND, SOMEtimes I think that media is the only thing this country does well anymore. By this I mean media in the broadest sense. For instance: remember the California Raisins, those cute animated characters that were created to help promote the California Raisin Growers Association? I read not long ago that the raisin characters are being retired by the association, but in their mid-1980s heyday they produced one of the singular statistics of the age: the association made more money from the licensing of the California Raisins than the actual California raisin growers made from selling actual California raisins. Surely this says something depressing about the general direction of the American economy. It seems more and more as though everything that succeeds—everything we can successfully promote and export, everything that customers want—is, in some fashion, a media image.

I'M THINKING THESE MORBID thoughts because I just spent a few days with my daughter in Disney World. Disney is the prototypical American media company: alarmingly shrewd marketers, extremely savvy about creating and licensing their characters, both new and old, and unimaginably successful. (Note to parents: Don't you love the way they re-release one of their classic old movies every year, which of course you have to take your kids to—and then follow up with the $24.95 video the next year, which of course you then have to buy for them?) Disney World is the most visited tourist attraction in the world, for which, I suppose, we should be grudgingly grateful. And yet there is something quite odd about walking through the international section of Epcot Center and seeing, for instance, French tourists buying trinkets at the ersatz "French village." I also found myself wondering how the company had managed to appropriate, and turn into highly lucrative cartoon characters, just about every great fable from the Middle Ages. Friar Tuck isn't part of a myth anymore; he's a Disney character. My daughter has the autograph to prove it.

I WAS ALSO STRUCK BY DISNEY'S fanatical attention to detail, which is another mark of the successful modern media company. Even if you're a sophisticated cynic (like any number of media types I could mention) and find Disney's relentless "Up With People" shtick tiresome, you can't help being impressed by the little surprises, the novel twists and turns, that are to be found at almost every Disney attraction. Time after time, I emerged from a ride thinking, "Why can't General Motors sweat the little details like that?" Maybe the American car companies should forget about building cars and just license them instead. Oh, I forgot: they're already starting to do that.

THEN AGAIN, MAYBE I SHOULD BE more appreciative of the licensing phenomenon, since it's beginning to look as though it will be the salvation of my little town. The evaporation of the Massachusetts economy is taking its toll—I can count half a dozen stores downtown that have closed—but there is one business here that is booming. I am referring, believe it or not, to the current craze of the kiddie set, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. You may not know that the Turtles were created by two graphic artists who live right here in Northampton, Peter Laird and Kevin Eastman. Thankfully, they continue to live here, doing Turtle deals as fast as they can be done. We're not yet in the same league as Bangor, Maine, where (so it is said) one-third of the city's GNP is produced by its most famous citizen, Stephen King, but clearly we're headed in that direction. I once tried to write about the impact of the Turtles on the local economy, but was quickly rebuffed by Laird and Eastman's local p.r. guy. "They'll never talk to you about how much the licensing brings in," he said, though he assured me the sums were astronomical. Given the ubiquity of the Ninja Turtles, I don't doubt it. Indeed, my own gripe with Laird and Eastman is not that they won't talk to me—this same p.r. guy assured me they'd turned down Tom Brokaw too—but that they've become so indiscriminate in their attempt to cash in before the Turtle craze fades. Back before they were rich and famous, the Turtles were a kind of charming goof on the superhero ethos, with the same kind of vaguely hip sensibilities that Matt Groening brings to the Simpsons. Now, alas, the Turtles have become indistinguishable from every other mindless Saturday morning cartoon. It seems to me that the Turtles' very ubiquity is what guarantees they'll eventually go the way of the hula hoop. This is what separates our local media moguls from the sassy marketeers at Walt Disney. I just hope, like most of my fellow citizens, that the Turtles last until our economy perks up, which, at this rate, would require more than the usual run of Massachusetts luck. Now, what did I do with that chain letter?

JOSEPH NOCERA

Joseph Nocera writes "The Profit Motive" column for *Esquire*.

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